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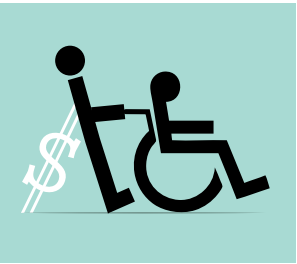
Top of the
News Scams
drive up
crime rate A5



Life Singaporean's Oscar-worthy
sounds D4



Opinion
Enough care
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A23



MOH seeks review of doc's case with wide implications

Ministry does not want doctors to practise defensive medicine in the wake of heavy fine

Salma Khalik
Senior Health Correspondent

In a move that could have wide-ranging implications for both doctors and patients, the Ministry of Health (MOH) has, for the first time, asked the Singapore Medical Council (SMC) to apply to the High Court to review a judgment by its disciplinary tribunal.

The tribunal had fined Dr Lim Lian Arn the maximum \$100,000 for not telling his patient of possible complications from a commonly used steroid injection.

This had caused a huge uproar within the medical profession and raised fears that doctors would start practising “defensive medicine” to safeguard themselves instead of making prescriptions in the patients’ best interests.

Senior Minister of State for Health Lam Pin Min had earlier ruled out reopening the case as both the SMC and the doctor concerned had accepted the judgment.

In an about-turn yesterday, MOH said it has requested the SMC to apply to the court to review that decision. It said: “Sentences have to be commensurate with the circumstances of each case.”

The SMC submitted its application yesterday, asking the High

Court to review the case and the tribunal’s judgment – and make revisions if necessary – even though the usual timeframe for such an appeal has passed.

Explaining its decision to ask for the review, MOH said that “the decision in this case carries with it much wider professional practice implications, and also has an impact on future cases”.

It added: “We are concerned that this case should not be viewed as or lead to the practice of defensive medicine, which would have an adverse impact on patient and clinical safety.”

“There have also been questions raised about the liability imposed in this case.”

The tribunal’s decision had sent a chill through doctors as many of them give the steroid jab in question without telling patients of the side effects – which are both transient and rare. They also felt the quantum of the fine imposed had set a precedent.

Dr Desmond Wai, a gastroenterologist in private practice, said: “As a result of that judgment, some GPs have stopped giving their patients steroid injections and are sending them to specialists instead. This will only push up costs for patients.”

He had earlier written to The Straits Times to point out that even

the widely used painkiller paracetamol has side effects.

More than 5,000 people had signed an appeal, started by another doctor, to share their concerns with Health Minister Gan Kim Yong. The subject was also raised in Parliament.

Sembawang GRC MP Lim Wee Kiak said that while the profession is self-regulated, MOH should nevertheless have oversight of key issues. In this case, he said, the \$100,000 fine “is excessive”.

While this is the first time that MOH has asked for a review of a disciplinary tribunal’s decision, an MOH spokesman told The Straits Times: “For future cases, MOH will consider providing our inputs to SMC should there be similar wider professional practice implications.”

The ministry said it will continue to engage with doctors “to have greater clarity and balance in the practice and processes”, and to keep healthcare costs affordable.

MP Tin Pei Ling, a member of the Government Parliamentary Committee for Health, said the penalty should match the offence.

“What kind of signal is this sending out? The well-being of the patient is important,” said Ms Tin. “We don’t want doctors distracted by ‘what ifs’ and practising defensive medicine. I hope the eventual outcome will be a fair one.”

salma@sph.com.sg

[SEE TOP OF THE NEWS A4](#)

Vietnam prepares for Trump-Kim summit



The national flags of North Korea and the United States could be seen hanging in the streets of Hanoi in preparation for the Trump-Kim summit, which will take place in the Vietnamese capital from next Wednesday to Thursday. The host is preparing for North Korean leader Kim Jong Un to arrive by train to meet US President Donald Trump. Sources said the preferred summit location is the Government Guesthouse. Pyongyang’s Special Representative for the US, Mr Kim Hyok Chol, arrived in Hanoi yesterday. He is expected to meet his US counterpart Stephen Biegun, who is heading to Hanoi, later this week to lay the groundwork for the summit. PHOTO: EPA-EFE [SEE TOP OF THE NEWS A8&9](#)

Mindef to beef up ranks of cyber experts

Two new schemes for cyber expert regulars and a cyber training school were announced by the Ministry of Defence (Mindef) yesterday as part of continued efforts to boost its cyber defence capabilities.

The schemes are the Command, Control, Communications and Computers Expert (C4X) vocation under

the military experts scheme, and the Defence Cyber Expert (DCX) job specialisation for defence executive officers. This is besides the cyber specialist scheme for full-time national servicemen introduced in February last year.

Apart from training the cyber specialists, the Singapore Armed

Forces (SAF) Cyber Defence School also aims to improve cyber awareness through workshops for Mindef and SAF personnel. Depending on their roles, DCX and C4X personnel will be trained in skills such as threat hunting and malware forensics.

[SEE TOP OF THE NEWS A4](#)

Talks with China going very well, says Trump

US President Donald Trump said trade talks with China are “going very well”, and again indicated that the March 1 deadline for raising tariffs could be extended.

On Tuesday, officials resumed in Washington high-stakes negotia-

tions aimed at ending a damaging tariff war between the economic superpowers. “I think the talks are going very well,” Mr Trump said on the sidelines of an event at the White House, reported Agence France-Presse.

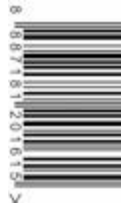
After the third round of talks

ended last Friday in Beijing with no deal, Mr Trump suggested he could extend a March 1 truce deadline for a deal to be reached. If he does not extend the timeframe, the US is set to more than double punitive import tariffs on US\$200 billion (\$\$270 bil-

lion) worth of Chinese goods.

“The date is not a magical date because a lot of things are happening,” Mr Trump told reporters on Tuesday. “We will see what happens.”

[SEE WORLD A12](#)



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10 must-reads for today

1 Battle for Chinese votes
Race and religion have not figured as much in the campaigns for Indonesia's upcoming presidential and parliamentary elections as they did during the 2017 Jakarta gubernatorial poll, but the issues remain the elephant in the room. Still, the ethnic Chinese vote will be crucial in a tight race. **WORLD A16**



Indonesian Chinese at a temple in Jakarta to mark Chap Goh Meh, the 15th and final day of Chinese New Year celebrations. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

2 MOH seeks review of case
For the first time, the Ministry of Health has asked the Singapore Medical Council to apply to the High Court to review a judgment by its disciplinary tribunal, which had fined a doctor \$100,000 for not telling his patient of possible complications from a steroid injection. **TOP OF THE NEWS A1**

3 Quota tough for some firms
Panellists discussing Budget 2019 on radio station Money FM 89.3 said some companies might have trouble adopting technology to deal with manpower issues, with the reduction in the foreign worker quota. Finance Minister Heng Swee Keat had said the dependency ratio ceiling in the service sector would be lowered to reduce reliance on foreign workers. **TOP OF THE NEWS A6**

4 ISIS teen loses citizenship
A British teenager who travelled to Syria to join the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria has been stripped of her citizenship. The decision has triggered a row over the ramifications of leaving her to fend for herself and her newborn in a war zone. **WORLD A10**

5 Caring for caregivers
The Government has introduced new measures such as a caregiver grant to ease the burden of those who look after their loved ones, but the community also needs to play a part, says senior social affairs correspondent Theresa Tan (below). **OPINION A23**



6 Call for clearer telco bills
The Infocomm Media Development Authority has proposed that telcos give a standardised breakdown of charges when billing customers. This means telcos will have to include charges for value-added or third-party services such as for roaming and Premium Rate Services. **HOME B1**

7 New high for COE renewals
Fuelled largely by relatively low certificate of entitlement (COE) premiums, last year saw a record number of COEs for cars extended beyond their 10-year lifespan. This figure is about 20 per cent more than the previous record high last year. **HOME B2**

8 More help for freelancers
More can be done to help freelance workers upgrade their skills, said industry representatives, given that there are around 200,000 of such workers in Singapore's growing gig economy. **BUSINESS C1**

9 Klopp confident despite tie
Liverpool's clash on Tuesday against Jurgen Klopp's old foes Bayern Munich was neither the "blockbuster" he predicted, nor was the goal-less home draw "the result we dreamt of". But the Reds manager remains upbeat about reaching the Champions League quarter-final with a good result in the second leg. **SPORT C9**

10 Tribute to Zul Sutan
More than 20 bands and singers will pay tribute to the late Singapore music legend Zul Sutan in a concert this Sunday at Hard Rock Cafe Singapore. Zul, a live music performer in the local scene for more than 40 years, died at the age of 61 last December. **LIFE D3**



Zul Sutan performing at the Mosaic Music Festival in 2012. PHOTO: ESPLANADE - THEATRES BY THE BAY

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INTERACTIVE
What will you receive?
Among this year's major Budget announcements were the \$6.1 billion Merdeka Generation Package and a \$1.1 billion Bicentennial Bonus. Find out what you are eligible for with our calculator.
<http://str.sg/calcbudget>



INTERACTIVE
Budget buzzwords
"Jobs", "tax" or "housing"? Check out what the most-used words were in Finance Minister Heng Swee Keat's Budget statement in 2019 and in other years.
<http://str.sg/budget2019speech>

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	SGD150,000 and above	1.95%	1.95%

RMB Time Deposit Promotion

Deposit Amount	Promotional Rates (p.a.)			
	3 months	6 months	9 months	12 months
RMB80,000 and above	2.45%	2.70%	2.90%	3.00%

USD Time Deposit Promotion

Deposit Amount	Promotional Rates (p.a.)			
	3 months	6 months	9 months	12 months
USD80,000 and above	2.75%	2.85%	2.95%	3.10%

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The Future Of Real Estate is in TechProp

OrangeTee believes the best way to beat disruption in the real estate industry is to become a TechProp company



By Pearlyn Tham

OrangeTee is to become a TechProp company

Even in an era of startups, digital disruptors and online everything, traditional established companies don't have to take a backseat and get left behind. Instead, they can face and fight the competition, and do things a notch better with their experience and expertise, which fly-by-night newcomers may not have.

For instance, within the OrangeTee group, OrangeTee & Tie, Singapore's third largest real estate agency with its 4,200-strong team of property agents work, communicate and research on its digital assets such as in-house Agent App, Property Agents Review portal, digital marketing tools and many more.

Mr Steven Tan, OrangeTee & Tie's managing director mentions a new term "TechProp" often, believing that it is the future for the traditional real estate companies or even the industry.

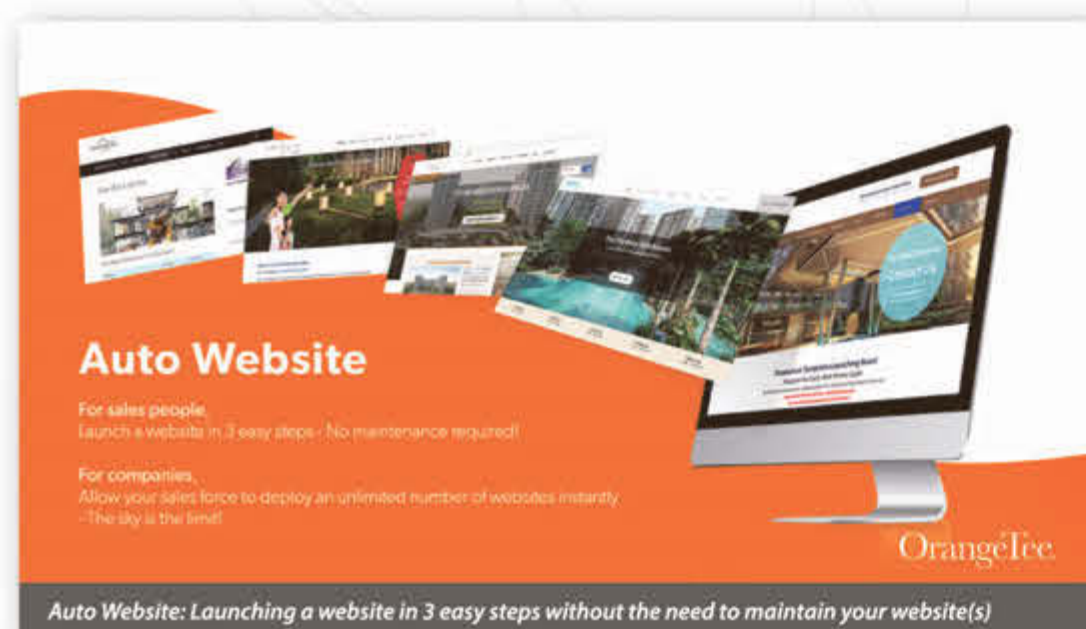
TechProp vs PropTech

What then differentiates a TechProp company from the more commonly known PropTech ones?

"PropTech companies usually focus on narrow functions or segments with high friction level or those underserved by traditional real estate companies. Their aim is to provide a better experience using digital technologies to reduce costs, increase revenue and remove friction. Hence, many PropTech companies are also the disruptors of our industry.

TechProp companies refer to the traditional real estate companies that are able to transform their business by accelerating innovation, building new skills, participating in the ecosystem and disrupting themselves to come out stronger in this digital age," he explains.

Mr Tan is confident that OrangeTee has the foundation to be the first TechProp company in Singapore because it has expertise in areas as diverse as agency, project marketing, valuation, and investment sales, and also because it has always been at the forefront of technology.



OrangeTee's journey of Digital Transformation

In 2015, Mr Tan set up a taskforce to digitally overhaul the real estate business. In the following year, Property Agents Review, the Singapore first agents' review platform was launched.

This became a game changer as potential buyers and sellers could look at other customers' reviews of property agents - all reviews submitted by clients after every successful transaction are unfiltered and published wholly to achieve full transparency, before engaging their services.

This unprecedented move provided a strategic first-mover advantage and showed the industry that OrangeTee is extremely serious in digital transformation, even if it requires any form of self-disruption to achieve optimal customer centricity.

Last year (2018), OrangeTee introduced Agent App, branding it as a 'one-stop real estate digital ecosystem for property agents', a "super" app to help agents do their job more quickly and efficiently. "This equips our agents with different capabilities, enhances their skills and knowledge, and lets them enhance their clients' customer journey," says Mr Tan.

Through Agent App, property agents can create new listings, market their properties, as well as manage and repost existing listings on 99.co, EdgeProp, Carousell and SRX. OrangeTee said that the feature, called Listing Hub, will continue to expand and sync with more portals.

Industry Game-Changing initiatives

One of the useful features on Agent App is the website set-up system called "Auto Website". Agents handling new launches generally turn to website builders like Wix or Weebly to create web pages for the property. This means that agents will have to spend even more time on top of their busy schedule on collating and updating information on their web pages.

But with Agent App, they can launch a website in three easy steps, on-the-go. Also, when there are new unit releases or price changes, a backend system updates all the agents' website automatically, freeing the agents to focus on generating sales leads and providing high-value personalised customer service.

Bill Leung, Executive Director of Information & Communications Technology, OrangeTee & Tie, says that there are plans to automate the digital marketing process for agents so they can save even more time and not have to work individually across platforms like Facebook or Google Ads.

On the app, agents can also access verified research reports and analytics charts in minutes and address their clients' concerns right away instead of trawling the internet for what can turn out to be inaccurate information.

Says Mr Leung: "Everything becomes more transparent and accurate, and faster because our agents execute everything on the app. In this way, there's a lot of trust in them from our customers. So far, our agents have been very excited about the app and feedback has been very positive."

And because he understands how busy his team can get, he knows that they may miss some SMSes, Facebook posts or emails on company updates and industry news. This is why OrangeTee has just launched their very own NewsFeed feature in Agent App.

Notably, the UXUI of the NewsFeed is similar to most social media platforms' news feed. Which means, the company can post text together with photos, videos and files and this make NewsFeed a powerful internal communication channel.



Platform to Platform (P2P) Partnerships

"Tying up with external partners "to increase their expertise, education and networking opportunities" is important too," says Mr Tan. On the app, agents can link up with partners to enhance their clients' customer journey experience.

One example of this is how an OrangeTee & Tie property listing may be automatically linked to the Online Property Marketplace of a local bank. This opens up new entry points for buyers and sellers who may be on the property marketplace to check on their financial health but then come across a property that they are interested in investing in.

Or OrangeTee & Tie's agents can also work with the TADA ride-hailing service on the Agent App, arranging a door-to-door concierge service for property viewing.

Finally, OrangeTee & Tie's agents will be able to have access to mobile eLearning modules, with OrangeTee providing the expertise and content while KPMG provides the platform which will be integrated with Agent App so that agents can learn on-the-go. It enables much faster and efficient delivery because agents can access eLearning material anytime they want and anywhere they are, setting their pace and training whenever they have spare time.

High Tech, High Touch, High Trust

All these help OrangeTee achieves the three highs (High Tech, High Touch & High Trust) as it combines traditional personal service with what emerging technology can offer because the company believes that having a high (personal) touch and high trust between agent and client is just as important as being high tech.

Mr Tan says: "We have many advantages over PropTech companies, such as our scale with more than 4,200 agents, stronger brand recognition, solid industrial knowledge, a wide spectrum of services, and reliable partnerships. Most importantly, the ability to provide personalised services with a human touch. We are confident that our first-mover advantage in digital transformation and will give us the edge to become the first TechProp company in Singapore or even the region."

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Mindef aims to recruit 300 cyber-security specialists

New cyber training school also set up amid efforts to boost digital defence

Lim Min Zhang

The Ministry of Defence (Mindef) is on a recruitment hunt for cyber-security specialists whose mission will be to beef up its cyber defences.

It has also set up a new cyber training school that will conduct courses for such specialised personnel and also help improve cyber hygiene for servicemen and employees across the ministry and the Singapore Armed Forces (SAF).

In a statement yesterday, Mindef said it hopes to recruit some 300 personnel to perform specialised operational roles in areas such as cyber incident response, monitoring of computer networks, and testing for security weaknesses in IT infrastructure and applications.

The announcements were made on the sidelines of an Advisory Council on Community Relations in Defence (Accord) visit to Stagmont Camp hosted by Senior Minister of State for Defence Heng Chee How.

Mr Heng told reporters after the visit that the establishment of these schemes and the cyber defence school will put Singapore in a better position to defend itself against cyber threats.

“(We have set up these capabilities) to ensure that we are operationally ready even in the face of these attacks so that we can protect our sovereignty and give peace of mind to Singaporeans,” he said.

Singapore has stepped up efforts on cyber security following attacks globally and here in recent years, such as the WannaCry ransomware attacks in 2017 and the SingHealth data breach in June last year.

Mindef was also hit by the theft of NRIC numbers, telephone numbers and birth dates of 850 personnel in February 2017, with the attack executed remotely over the Internet.

Digital defence came under the spotlight recently with its launch as the sixth pillar of Total Defence last



Senior Minister of State for Defence Heng Chee How (second from left) and members of the Advisory Council on Community Relations in Defence (Accord) watching a demonstration of cyber operators performing incident response in the Cyber Defence Test and Evaluation Centre at Stagmont Camp yesterday. Accord members who were with him included (from far left) Banyan Tree Holdings senior vice-president Claire Chiang, Asia Resource Corporation executive chairman Tony Chew Leong Chee and Aljunied GRC MP Sylvia Lim. ST PHOTO: KHALID BABA

Friday – the first such addition to the framework in 35 years.

In February last year, Mindef introduced a scheme for full-time national servicemen (NSF) cyber specialists, where they take classes under the Singapore Institute of Technology's cyber-security degree programme, while being deployed in advanced cyber-defence roles.

The 300 regular personnel will come under two schemes. These are: the Command, Control, Communications and Computers Expert (C4X) vocation under the military experts scheme, and the Defence Cyber Expert (DCX) job specialisation for defence executive officers.

The C4X scheme will be implemented in the middle of this year, while the DCX scheme started late last year.

The SAF Cyber Defence School, which was established last April, was opened yesterday by director of military intelligence and Chief C4I (Command, Control, Communications, Computers and Intelligence), Brigadier-General Ng Chad-Son. It has run courses such as the Cyber Defence Operator and Cyber Specialist Cadet courses, meant for NSFs in the cyber vocation.

For DCX and C4X personnel, up to 20 weeks of training will be done at the school, which will also con-

duct cyber-security workshops for servicemen and employees of Mindef and the SAF to strengthen education on cyber standards, regulations and best practices, and to inculcate strong cyber awareness.

Depending on their operational roles, DCX and C4X personnel will be trained in technical skills, such as threat hunting, malware forensics, cryptography, network security and cyber analytics.

Military Expert 4 S. Subash, 30, a plans officer under SAF C4 Command who has signed up to be a C4X, said he will have to take a number of external courses as part of his transition process.

“This is to ensure we keep up with evolving technologies and to be updated with the cyber threats out there,” he said.

Defence Cyber Expert Serena Ong, 31, said she took on the job because it was challenging and there was a lot of room for professional growth, with cyber threats growing and evolving all the time.

“The DCX scheme is good because now there is a shortage of cyber-security professionals not just in Singapore, but also around the world. This scheme will help to widen the pool of candidates,” she said.

mzlim@sph.com.sg

PREPARED FOR THREATS

(We have set up these capabilities) to ensure that we are operationally ready even in the face of these attacks so that we can protect our sovereignty and give peace of mind to Singaporeans.



SENIOR MINISTER OF STATE FOR DEFENCE HENG CHEE HOW

Doctors welcome MOH move to get High Court to review SMC judgment

Salma Khalik
Senior Health Correspondent

Doctors welcomed the Ministry of Health's (MOH) decision to have the High Court review the Singapore Medical Council's (SMC) disciplinary tribunal judgment against Dr Lim Lian Arn.

The tribunal had imposed a \$100,000 fine on Dr Lim for not telling his patient about possible side effects of a commonly used steroid injection.

There was great concern among the medical fraternity that this judgment would lead to the practice of defensive medicine, with doctors dumping an overload of information on patients to protect themselves against such charges.

In a statement yesterday, the Ministry of Health (MOH) said it has noted and understands the concerns in relation to both the decision of the disciplinary tribunal in Dr Lim's case, and the imposition of a \$100,000 fine against Dr Lim.

Dr Tho Kam San, the doctor who started a petition to Health Minister Gan Kim Yong that garnered more than 5,000 names in the wake of the judgment, said he was glad that MOH had decided to have the case reviewed.

He told The Straits Times: “It is heartening to know that MOH understands and is aware of the concerns of many doctors and allied healthcare professionals, which was voiced out at many forums and platforms.”

He saw the ministry's move as “a

statement to doctors”. He added that doctors had perceived the judgment as telling them that they needed to be “burdened by a lot of non-productive” action, such as listing all minor side effects.

Dr Tho said the move augurs well for the future of medicine here. “We all aspire to practise holistic and not legalistic medicine.”

Gastroenterologist Desmond Wai said the move shows that MOH “listens to the ground”. He added: “We have to praise MOH for doing what is right.”

He had earlier written to The Straits Times to say: “If every possible complication of a medication or procedure has to be explained to patients, it will be extremely difficult to practise medicine.”

He gave the example of paracetamol, which is used so frequently that doctors do not highlight the side effects.

But “the major and common side effects of paracetamol are mainly drug allergy and liver toxicity if taken in large quantities”, he said, adding that it is also associated with more than 20 other potential adverse effects, including insomnia and headaches.

Dr Lim Wee Kiak, one of the MPs who raised questions on the judgment in Parliament, said: “Since the medical fraternity and public have expressed concern on this case and a few MPs among us have also appealed in Parliament to MOH to review the case, I am glad that SMC is responding to our appeals for the case to be reviewed.”

Dr Wong Seng Weng, a cancer



MOH said it understands the concerns over the SMC disciplinary tribunal's decision in the case of Dr Lim Lian Arn (above), and the imposition of a \$100,000 fine against him.

PHOTO: GLENEAGLES MEDICAL CENTRE

HEARTENING RESPONSE

It is heartening to know that MOH understands and is aware of the concerns of many doctors and allied healthcare professionals, which was voiced out at many forums and platforms.



DR THO KAM SAN, on MOH's move to have the case involving Dr Lim Lian Arn reviewed. Dr Tho started a petition to Health Minister Gan Kim Yong that garnered over 5,000 names in the wake of the SMC judgment.

doctor, said if nothing is done, doctors may stress risks rather than benefits. This could “distort the patients' perception of the balance between benefits and risks”, leading to the patients making the wrong decisions for their health.

salma@sph.com.sg

How complaints against doctors are handled

Rei Kurohi
and Selina Lum

A patient who wishes to make a complaint against a doctor must send a letter to the Singapore Medical Council (SMC). The complaint must be made within six years of the incident and must be accompanied by copies of relevant documents supporting the claims.

Once the complaint is received, it is investigated by a three-member complaints committee chaired by an SMC member, a doctor and a layperson. The committee's decisions are independent of the SMC.

The investigation can take between nine months to more than a year – sometimes longer – after which the patient is told of the decision in writing.

The complaint can then be dismissed, a mediation called for, or the doctor warned or counselled.

If the committee decides not to escalate the case, patients who are not satisfied with its decision can appeal to the Health Minister within 30 days of being notified. The minister's decision is final.

If the committee decides to escalate the case, the SMC will convene a disciplinary tribunal, which includes a judge, a judicial commissioner of the Supreme Court or a senior legally trained person.

The tribunal can impose a fine of up to \$100,000 and a suspension lasting between three months and three years. The doctor may appeal against the tribunal's decision in the High Court.

Under the Medical Registration Act, an appeal against the deci-

sion of a disciplinary tribunal must be filed within 30 days.

The appeal, which can be made by either the doctor or the SMC, will be heard by the Court of Three Judges.

Despite the stipulated period, court procedure provides for an appeal to be filed after the time limit has elapsed.

This is by way of an application to the court to seek a time extension for the appeal to be filed.

Applicants have to explain to the court why the appeal was not filed on time. The court may not grant an extension if it is not convinced by the reasons.

In October 2012, aesthetic doctor Georgia Lee was cleared of professional misconduct after she was given a time extension to appeal against her December 2011 conviction.

Lawyers said another possible legal route is to seek a judicial review, asking the court to examine the tribunal's decision.

This was the procedure taken by Dr Susan Lim to challenge the decision of the SMC to convene a second disciplinary committee against her for overcharging a patient in 2007.

Last year, the authorities started looking into changes to the Medical Registration Act to speed up disciplinary proceedings against doctors and make the process more transparent.

These include measures to widen the pool of people qualified to assess complaints, and new guidelines to ensure consistency in the penalties meted out.

rei@sph.com.sg
selinal@sph.com.sg

Crime numbers up with surge in online and phone scams

False e-commerce deals, fake loans and Net love fraud cases make up 65% of top 10 scams

Cara Wong

The number of crimes in Singapore rose marginally last year, and the main culprit is the surge in online and phone scams, such as those involving e-commerce, fake loans or lucky draw winnings.

The latest police statistics released yesterday show a 1.4 per cent increase to 33,134 crime cases, up from 32,668 the previous year.

The top 10 scams soared by 20.6 per cent to 5,796 last year.

Of these, false e-commerce transactions, fake loans and Internet love scams accounted for 65.2 per cent.

The eight scams that grew in number included fake loan schemes, lucky draw fraud and “Chinese officials” impersonation swindles.

Loan scams, in which victims are cheated into making deposits for “loans” that never materialise, saw the biggest jump – rising 151 per cent, from 396 to 994 cases.

Victims lost about \$2 million alto-

gether, more than triple that in 2017.

But victims of business e-mail impersonation scams suffered the biggest loss – \$57.9 million in all.

As for Internet love scams, the number went down by 20.1 per cent to 660 cases, with losses also declining by 25.7 per cent to \$27.5 million.

Similarly, the total amount lost by victims of the top 10 scams fell, by 7.1 per cent to \$158 million.

The police attributed it partly to a Transnational Commercial Crime Task Force set up in October 2017.

It investigates transnational scams like Internet love scams, and has closed over 600 bank accounts and recovered over \$1.4 million.

Mr David Chew, director of the

Commercial Affairs Department, said crime has moved online along with the increase in tech-savvy consumers, and the Internet enables online criminals to prey on unsuspecting victims from all over the world.

“It is imperative that all of us be aware and keep ourselves updated on such threats on the Internet and exercise vigilance to protect ourselves from falling victim to scams,” Mr Chew added.

Other key areas of concern include a spike in the number of criminals who made unauthorised transactions on the Internet, or had unauthorised access to another account or sensitive information.

This include hackers who use a victim’s credit card for illegal purchases or people who sent phishing e-mails to get sensitive data.

The cases, which come under the Computer Misuse Act, totalled

1,204, a jump of 40.3 per cent.

Another worrying statistic is that of molestation, which went up by 11.9 per cent to 1,747 cases. Although the number of molestation cases on public transport dipped by 2.4 per cent to 202 cases, reports of molestation at nightspots soared by 34.3 per cent to 145.

There were also more unlicensed moneylending harassment cases, totalling 4,619 – a 21.1 per cent rise.

Most were carried out electronically by loan sharks using text messaging or e-mail. In all, there were 3,719 of these cases, a rise of 33.5 per cent. The rest involved property damage, which fell by 12.5 per cent to 900 cases.

The decline in theft and related crimes – by 8.6 per cent to 12,279 cases – helped to reduce the impact of the sharp rise in scams.

The theft-related crime that fell the most was bicycle stealing, which plunged by 42.3 per cent to 552 cases.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (Investigations and Intelligence) Florence Chua, who is also director of the Criminal Investigation Department, said: “We will continue with our multi-pronged approach of public education, leveraging technology to fight crime and sustaining our tough enforcement efforts to keep Singapore safe and secure.”

carawong@sph.com.sg

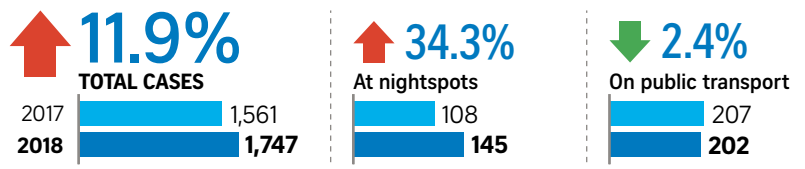
SEE HOME B2

Top 10 scams in Singapore

	2018	% change from 2017	Amount cheated	% change from 2017
E-commerce	2,125	▲ 11.4%	\$1.9m	▲ 35.7%
Loans	994	▲ 151%	\$2m	▲ 253.4%
Internet love	660	▼ 20.1%	\$27.5m	▼ 25.7%
Credit for sex	533	▲ 28.7%	\$1.5m	▲ 50%
Investment ruse	431	▲ 3.4%	\$52.7m	▼ 24.2%
Business e-mail impersonation	378	▲ 13.9%	\$57.9m	▲ 30.7%
“Chinese officials” impersonation	302	▲ 60.6%	\$12.7m	▼ 0.8%
Lucky draw	159	▲ 120.8%	\$1.8m	▼ 51.4%
ICA impersonation	112	▼ 36.4%	\$441,000	▲ 2.6%
Fraudulent subscription of cellphone lines	102	▲ 32.5%	\$103,000	▲ 3%

OTHER CRIMES OF CONCERN

Increase in outrage of modesty cases



Increase in cases under Computer Misuse Act



Source: SINGAPORE POLICE FORCE STRAITS TIMES GRAPHICS

Young drug abusers, PMD fires two areas of concern

Fabian Koh

There were fewer cases of thieves stealing vehicles and things from dwellings and shops last year, but the growing number of scams, especially online, caused Singapore’s overall crime rate to go up a notch.

But the rate continues to remain at a low level, the Ministry of Home Affairs said yesterday.

There are, however, several areas of concern, and the ministry cited two: The large proportion of young drug abusers arrested and the growing number of fires involving power-assisted bicycles and personal mobility devices.

The ministry highlighted these ups and downs when it gave an overview of the findings of the agencies under its charge ahead of the release of their annual statistics.

The ministry also declared that Singapore remains relatively drug-free. “This is significant against the backdrop of a more challenging global and regional drug supply situation,” it said.

Besides the falling number of theft and related crimes, speeding violations and accidents involving elderly pedestrians were also on the decline.

Similarly, the number of non-emergency medical calls had dipped.

The Singapore Civil Defence Force attributed this to its efforts in educating people about its tiered medical response framework, which puts life-threatening emergencies ahead of less serious cases.

The number of residential fire incidents had also gone down.

On the other hand, more drug abusers were arrested, particularly for abusing new psychoactive substances and methamphetamine.

The proportion of young drug abusers among the new abusers arrested also remained high, said the ministry.

On the roads, more people were killed in motorcycle accidents, red light-running violations and accidents caused by drink driving.

Other figures which were cause for concern included incidents of computer misuse as well as outrage of modesty, especially on public transport and in public entertainment outlets.

The SGSecure movement, which was launched in 2016 to prepare people in the event of a terrorist attack, had gathered “significant momentum” and raised public awareness and preparedness for emergencies, said the ministry.

“Our community is now more aware of the terror threat and the role they play in the SGSecure movement.”

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Budget roundtable throws up ideas to retain older workers

Experts also look at steps to help workers and companies, and issues such as healthcare costs

Adrian Lim
Political Correspondent

Redesigned jobs, flexible work arrangements with fair pay, and a dedicated job portal are some ways to help older Singaporeans stay in the workforce, experts said at a roundtable following Monday's Budget.

Another suggestion was to look at more closely aligning the retirement age, currently at 62, with the Central Provident Fund (CPF) payout eligibility age, which is 65.

These were among the ideas given by four panellists at The Straits Times Roundtable on Singapore Budget 2019 yesterday, where they discussed the Government's financial plans for the upcoming

fiscal year.

In the hour-long session, moderated by ST associate editor Vikram Khanna, the experts gave their views on the various initiatives to help workers and companies adapt in a changing global environment, as well as measures to address issues such as healthcare costs and social mobility.

They also delved into the issue of support for older workers.

During his Budget speech, Finance Minister Heng Swee Keat said the Special Employment Credit (SEC) and the Additional SEC scheme, which incentivise and encourage employers to hire senior workers, will both be extended for another year, until Dec 31 next year.

Mr Heng added that a tripartite work group studying the concerns of older workers will present its recommendations later this year.

Singapore University of Social Sciences economist Walter Theseira, one of the panellists, called for more flexible work arrangements for older workers, who may not want to work at the same level of intensity as before.

But the pay must be equitable, the Nominated MP noted.

"If somebody either can't work at full capacity or doesn't want to, then of course their wages have to adjust to some extent. Flexibility has to be there, but it has to be done in a way that is not unfair to the older worker," he said.

Professor Theseira said the Government could study aligning the retirement age with the CPF eligible payout age. He made the point that there is a "gap" between when workers are legally protected from

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being unfairly dismissed due to age and when their retirement support can begin.

While there are guidelines leading up to the re-employment age of 67, workers do not have certainty in the conditions of employment, he added.

UOB economist Barnabas Gan suggested a job portal through which older workers can get part-time contract jobs. Compared with one or two decades ago, senior workers today are more educated

and could contribute in consultative or mentorship roles in companies, Mr Gan said.

Labour MP Patrick Tay said there needs to be more efforts to redesign jobs to make them "easier, safer and smarter" for older workers by leveraging technologies such as artificial intelligence or digitalisation.

Mr Tay, who is an NTUC assistant secretary-general, said society's mindset as a whole has to change, to be more accepting of senior workers. Singapore Business Federation

chief executive Ho Meng Kit expects the tripartite work group to recommend regulations for the employment of older workers.

There needs to be a careful balance, he said, cautioning that while larger companies have resources to meet the requirements, smaller firms may "shed the older workers" if the rules are too stringent.

adrianl@sph.com.sg

SEE OPINION A24

Tighter foreign worker quota may be tough on some firms: Panellists

Sue-Ann Tan

The tightening of the foreign worker quota will push companies to adopt technology to address manpower needs, but panellists at an event hosted by radio station Money FM 89.3 said some firms may struggle to make the switch.

The panel, comprising SME Centre@ASME chairman Irene Boey, UOB economist Barnabas Gan and the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants' (ACCA) Singapore Network Panel chairman James Lee, was discussing the Budget yesterday.

In particular, the panellists focused on the Dependency Ratio Ceiling (DRC) in the service sector, which Finance Minister Heng Swee Keat said on Monday was to be lowered.

Ms Boey said the Government should be lauded for trying to get the service sector to restructure more quickly, but added that some segments may need more time.

"We have advance notice and it will be rolled out in phases, which we are grateful for, but the deferment of lowering the DRC in certain segments might be necessary," she said.

Speaking at the event sponsored by UOB, Ms Boey noted that in the sector, "service by humans is the main differentiator (between businesses)", and there is a need to understand the problems some companies face and why they cannot transform as quickly as others.

In his Budget speech, Mr Heng said the DRC cut is aimed at reduc-



DJ Howie Lim engaging (from left) UOB economist Barnabas Gan, Association of Chartered Certified Accountants' Singapore Network Panel chairman James Lee and SME Centre@ASME chairman Irene Boey in a discussion on the Budget hosted by Money FM 89.3 at the UOB Plaza Atrium yesterday. ST PHOTO: KUA CHEE SIONG

ing the reliance on foreign workers.

It is also aimed at getting companies to upgrade Singaporean workers and build deep capabilities in sectors such as food and beverage, and retail, both of which remain very labour-intensive.

On Jan 1 next year, the proportion

of foreign workers a firm can employ will drop from 40 per cent to 38 per cent. It will drop to 35 per cent on Jan 1, 2021.

For the subset S Pass workers – mid-skilled foreigners earning at least \$2,300 a month – the quota will be cut from 15 per cent to 13 per

cent on Jan 1 next year, and to 10 per cent on Jan 1, 2021.

Mr Gan said that the switch from a reliance on foreign workers to reskilling locals is the right move, but he added: "It is not just about the number of jobs, but the quality of jobs."

However, he acknowledged that the Budget signals to businesses that they "must prepare for the next 10 years to come rather than the here and now".

Mr Lee noted that the tightened quotas will push companies to look to technology for solutions.

He said: "If you look at it in the long term, the DRC is a good thing as it forces us to think harder of the solutions available."

"If I have one nurse caring for five patients today, and next time it will be eight patients, that is where technology can come in to make it more efficient."

In getting small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to adopt technology to innovate and grow, Ms Boey said there should not be a "one-size-fits-all" approach.

"More than 60 per cent of SMEs are micro enterprises, which are those with less than \$1 million in annual revenue, so the schemes have to take that into consideration."

"We have to consider the affordability of a scheme to a micro enterprise, as opposed to a medium or large enterprise," she added.

Mr Gan said economists welcomed the initiatives for SMEs to innovate and grow, which were announced in the Budget.

They include the new Scale-up SG programme – to help local companies grow and innovate – and an expansion of the SMEs Go Digital programme, to cover a larger number and wider range of cost-effective, pre-approved digital solutions.

Mr Gan said: "We understand that businesses are the heart of the economy and most of the labour supply is dedicated to SMEs."

"That is why when we look at the Budget and see SME initiatives, we are comforted that the Government is trying to support SMEs."

suetan@sph.com.sg

Join Read With ST campaign and win treats

Jolene Ang

Almost every day, housewife Lee Cheng Huan sends her three children to school, returns home and sits down with a copy of the day's The Straits Times.

When she comes across something interesting or important for her children – daughter, 13, and twin sons, 11 – Mrs Lee cuts out the stories and pins them on a noticeboard in their study room for them to read when they are home from school.

The Lee family are the first to be featured in the #readwithST campaign, which started yesterday and ends on May 15. The campaign aims to encourage parents to read ST with their children, as a bonding activity and teaching tool.

During the campaign, ST readers can join a social media campaign to win prizes every week. Parents can relate the stories in ST to their own experiences, which they can share with their children and on social media with like-minded parents.

At least three entries will be picked each week, and winners will be contacted via e-mail or their social media account every Wednesday.

Prizes include tickets to Wild Wild Wet, Shaw movie vouchers



Housewife Lee Cheng Huan with her daughter Sarah and twin sons Timothy (in yellow) and Thomas. The Lee family are the first to be featured in the #readwithST campaign, which started yesterday. Mrs Lee has been cutting and pinning up news stories for her children to read for the past three years. PHOTO: NOISY CRAYONS PTE LTD

and McDonald's breakfast coupons.

The campaign will also be paired with a subscription promotion offering Samsung tablets at discounted prices so that families can access and easily share Premium articles.

Mr Warren Fernandez, editor-in-chief of Singapore Press Hold-

ings' English/Malay/Tamil Media Group and editor of The Straits Times, said: "One of the best ways to equip our young is to give them enquiring minds. This will help them figure out their world."

"There is no better place to start doing that than reading about the

world in the pages and platforms of The Straits Times."

Mrs Lee, 52, has been an ST subscriber for more than 10 years. She said she has been cutting and pinning up news stories for her children for the past three years.

"They need to know what is hap-

pening outside Singapore. I tell them they are in a fortunate family, but the world outside can be ugly."

"They have to know the facts of life; if not, they could grow up thinking the world is a cushy place."

Her husband, Dr Lee Kang Hoe, 55, works in the Asian American Liver Centre at Gleneagles Hospital.

When ST interviewed the family last December, they were on vacation in England and planning to visit Dr Lee's alma mater, Cambridge University.

Mrs Lee said that as a family, they have begun to discuss broad themes covered in the daily paper.

Their latest discussion was on Brexit, and whether it would cause things to be more costly in England. "That interests them because they were doing research on London before we left," said Mrs Lee.

Her daughter Sarah is now a Secondary 1 student at Methodist Girls' School, while sons Timothy and Thomas are Primary 6 pupils at Anglo-Chinese School (Junior).

Timothy said: "Mum always cuts out articles about animals, nature and what happens in Singapore. It is interesting to read about how humans impact the environment."

"My family loves nature, and we don't want animals to go extinct."

The children are starting to read more international news, said Mrs Lee. "My daughter is getting older, so I have asked her to start reading the papers on her own."

jolenezl@sph.com.sg

Prizes up for grabs

Win Wild Wild Wet tickets, Shaw movie vouchers, McDonald's breakfast coupons and more when you join the #readwithST campaign.

Share a Straits Times article that you have read with your child on your Facebook or Instagram page.

Post a nugget of wisdom that you and your child have learnt from the article, tag @The Straits Times and include the hashtag #readwithST in your post. Ensure that your Facebook posts and Instagram accounts are public.

At least three entries will be selected each week. Winners will be contacted via e-mail or social media every Wednesday. Terms and conditions apply.

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US and North Korean flags were put up along the streets of Hanoi ahead of next week's summit between North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and US President Donald Trump. US Special Representative for North Korea Stephen Biegun was travelling to the Vietnamese capital on Tuesday to continue preparations for the summit, and he will hold further talks with his North Korean counterpart Kim Hyok Chol. PHOTO: EPA-EFE

FOCUSED ON END GOAL

I am in no rush. There is no testing. As long as there is no testing, I am in no rush. If there is testing, that is another deal... I would just like to see, ultimately, denuclearisation of North Korea.



U.S. PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP

Mr Biegun had spent three days in North Korea from Feb 6 to 8, a trip he said had been "productive" but added that there was "hard work to do" before the summit.

Mr Biegun is to hold further meetings with his North Korean counterpart Kim Hyok Chol ahead of the summit.

Mr Kim Jong Un has appointed the little-known Mr Kim Hyok Chol to spearhead working-level talks with Mr Biegun, said South Korean officials and experts, noting the significant change.

The North Korean leader has purged and replaced many top diplomats and officials who served his father and grandfather with new, younger advisers as he gears up for the summit, they noted.

Mr Kim Hyok Chol, a former ambassador to Spain who was expelled in 2017 after North Korean nuclear and missile tests, has been working at the State Affairs Commission – a top governing body chaired by Mr Kim Jong Un, according to a South Korean official.

Mr Kim Hyok Chol replaced Vice-Foreign Minister Choe Son Hui, who led negotiations in the run-up to the first Trump-Kim summit in Singapore last June 12.

Mr Kim Hyok Chol, who arrived in Hanoi yesterday, is expected to meet Mr Biegun later in the week to lay the groundwork for the summit.

Earlier on Tuesday, Mr Trump spoke with South Korean President Moon Jae-in about the summit, and he was set to talk to Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe yesterday.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Geng Shuang, when asked at a daily news briefing whether Mr Kim Jong Un would meet Chinese President Xi Jinping on his way through the country, said he was unaware of the situation. REUTERS, AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Trump in no rush to get North Korea to denuclearise

US leader says sanctions will stay in place for now, noting freeze on missile testing since 2017

WASHINGTON • US President Donald Trump has said he wants North Korea to end its nuclear programme, but has no pressing time schedule for this, as he dispatched

his special envoy to finalise preparations for a second summit with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un next week.

Speaking to reporters at the

White House on Tuesday, Mr Trump said sanctions against North Korea would remain in place in the meantime, and noted Pyongyang's freeze on nuclear and missile testing since 2017.

"I am in no rush. There is no testing. As long as there is no testing, I am in no rush. If there is testing, that is another deal," he said.

"I would just like to see, ultimately, denuclearisation of North Korea," he added.

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said of Mr Kim last week that it was "time for him to deliver", but the Trump administration has moved away from demands that the North give up its nuclear weapons immediately, and has appeared to adopt a

more gradual, reciprocal approach that Pyongyang has insisted on.

The US State Department said that US Special Representative for North Korea Stephen Biegun was travelling to Hanoi on Tuesday to continue preparations for Mr Trump's summit with Mr Kim, scheduled to take place from Feb 27 to 28 in the Vietnamese capital.

Experts divided whether closure of N-complex is still a big deal

SEOUL • For much of the past four decades, North Korea's nuclear ambitions have been focused on a sprawling complex nestled in the mountains north of Pyongyang.

All of that could come to an end after President Donald Trump and leader Kim Jong Un meet next week.

The dismantlement of the Yongbyon Nuclear Scientific Research Centre has emerged in recent months as a potential outcome from a second summit between the leaders planned for Feb 27-28 in Hanoi, Vietnam.

Mr Moon Chung-in, a special adviser to South Korea's President Moon Jae-in, told Bloomberg last week that Mr Kim had agreed to close the plant and allow inspectors – possibly giving the United States valuable insights into Mr Kim's weapons programmes.

A deal to shutter Yongbyon would represent Mr Trump's first tangible victory towards reducing Mr Kim's nuclear capacity since the two leaders met last June 12 in Singapore – even though North Korea has made similar promises before.

The move could potentially deprive Mr Kim of enough plutonium to make roughly one atomic bomb a year, and possibly other materials needed to make smaller, more powerful nuclear weapons.

Still, that would fall far short of the "final, fully verified denuclearisation" that Secretary of State Michael Pompeo and other Trump administration officials have demanded. Even if Mr Kim closes Yongbyon, arms control experts say he probably has at least one other secret plant that can produce enough uranium to make as many as six nuclear bombs a year.

Mr Chun Yung-woo, a former South Korean nuclear envoy who helped broker one of the deals to shut Yongbyon, said the regime has shifted its focus to building better warheads and intercontinental ballistic missiles that could hit the US. North Korea probably has

enough fissile material to continue most of its nuclear weapons programme, even if it closed all its other fuel-production facilities, Mr Chun said.

"Ten years ago, that was our main concern," he said. "The relative value of Yongbyon and the enrichment plants outside of Yongbyon is now negligible."

Mr Trump told reporters at the White House on Tuesday that he was in "no rush whatsoever" to reach a deal with Mr Kim because he has a strong relationship with the North Korean leader and that sanctions against the country remained in place while the two sides talk.

Meanwhile, the US special representative for North Korea, Mr Stephen Biegun, was travelling to Hanoi to prepare for the summit, the State Department said.

Yongbyon, located about 100km north of the capital, carries sym-

bolic value as the long-time crown jewel of North Korea's nuclear weapons programme.

First built in 1979, its reactor has produced little electricity, but supplied the plutonium and research facilities needed for North Korea to test its first atomic bomb in 2006.

Closing Yongbyon, as well as a lab that might produce tritium – a radioactive isotope of hydrogen that helps in miniaturising warheads – would be a success, according to Professor Siegfried Hecker, who was among a group of nuclear scientists who observed a uranium-enrichment operation at the facility during a 2010 inspection tour.

"Shutting down and dismantling the Yongbyon nuclear complex is a big deal," said Prof Hecker, who has visited the site four times.

"It will stop the production of plutonium and tritium, and it will greatly diminish the ability to make highly enriched uranium."

Still, inspecting the dozens of buildings at Yongbyon could take weeks, and full dismantlement would drag on even longer.

Disagreements might arise over how much of the complex is covered by any deal.

In exchange for dismantling Yongbyon, Mr Kim would probably demand relief from international sanctions – the US' main point of leverage in negotiations.

The demolition would require delicate negotiations on where and when inspectors can roam, an area over which similar talks collapsed a decade ago.

The regime might divert nuclear materials to other facilities.

"We do want to make sure that the 'shutdown of Yongbyon' is as comprehensive as possible and as irreversible as possible," said Ms Melissa Hanham, a non-proliferation expert and director of the One Earth Future Foundation's Datayo Project. "We don't want to repeat the mistakes of the past."

BLOOMBERG



One of South Korea's Blue House security officers wearing a jacket with 12 numbers – 615104427919 – sewn onto the back. The digits stand for key moments in inter-Korean ties. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

S. Korean security officials don jackets bearing code of hope

SEOUL • Seoul security officials are wearing jackets embroidered with a secret well-wishing message for Mr Kim Jong Un, deploying a code representing key moments in inter-Korean relations ahead of a summit between the North Korean leader and US President Donald Trump.

The dark blue jackets – worn by about 10 officers of the Blue House's National Security Office – have the 12-digit sequence 615104427919 sewn onto the back.

The number 615 marks the June 15 North-South joint declaration in 2000, 104 stands for the Oct 4 North-South joint declaration in 2007, 427 is for the historic Panmunjom Declaration on April 27 last year, and 919 stands for the Sept 19 Pyongyang Joint Declaration that also took place last year.

"We just hope to keep the positive spirit alive," one jacket wearer told Agence France-Presse. "We have ordered and are wearing the jackets at work voluntarily. It was solely our idea to do this."

A Blue House spokesman refused to say whether the jacket wearers had the upcoming summit between Mr Trump and Mr Kim specifically in mind this week as they donned the jackets, which they had made last year.

Mr Kim is expected to visit Seoul not long after the summit.

Cross-border ties improved dramatically as the leaders of the two Koreas met three times last year – twice at the border truce village of Panmunjom and once in the North's capital Pyongyang – and a reconciliatory push gathered pace.

The May 26 summit, the second inter-Korean talk held at Panmunjom last year, was not included on the coats as no declaration was released after the event, said the security official who wore the jacket.

"We wanted to have these numbers sewn on the back of our jackets so that we remember those key dates and wish our best for the next inter-Korean summit," he added.

He told of how one of his colleagues came up with the idea, brought it up during a work meeting, and others agreed to it.

During South Korean President Moon Jae-in's visit to Pyongyang last September, Mr Kim promised to pay a return visit to the South's capital Seoul. If Mr Kim visits as expected this year, he will be the first Kim dynasty leader to visit Seoul. Mr Moon welcomed Mr Kim's comments at the time, agreeing to meet him "more frequently" this year.

Mr Kim is scheduled to meet Mr Trump in the Vietnamese capital Hanoi on Feb 27 and 28, following their first summit in Singapore on June 12 last year.

Critics say that Pyongyang has made no concrete commitments so far and is unlikely to surrender its nuclear weapons.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

News analysis

Summit throws spotlight on Vietnam as strategic player

It is emerging as a key US partner in region and as a role model of opening up and reforms



Tan Hui Yee

Indochina Bureau Chief
In Bangkok

threatening his regime's survival.

Dr Huong Le Thu, a senior analyst at the Australian Strategic Policy Institute, told The Straits Times: "By hosting and potentially acting as a role model of opening up and reforms, Vietnam will be taking up an important role in engaging North Korea and (addressing the) long-term 'what's beyond' question of denuclearisation."

This is not to say that its "socialist-oriented market economy" is firing on all cylinders.

Hanoi is still trying to clean up a financial system scarred by earlier bouts of unchecked lending. Last year, it jailed a former deputy central bank governor, as well as more than 40 bankers and executives, over unsustainable loans by a private bank which went on to suffer heavy losses and was taken over by the state.

A report by the International Monetary Fund in July last year, while lauding the country's banking reforms and attempt to cut red tape, noted that "economic distortions and capacity constraints remain".

The relatively high level of public debt – estimated at 57.9 per cent of gross domestic product last year – prevents the country from spending more on infrastructure or mitigating downturns, it noted.

For now, Vietnam's busy industrial zones and bustling shopping malls may prove draws enough for Mr Kim. According to Reuters, he may visit the country's manufacturing base of Bac Ninh and the industrial port town of Hai Phong after he arrives next Monday.

The blitz of publicity will no doubt burnish the credentials of Vietnam's ruling Communist Party as it prepares to induct new leaders in two years.

tanhy@sph.com.sg

Hosts expecting Kim to arrive by train

HANOI • Vietnam is preparing for North Korean leader Kim Jong Un to arrive by train for his summit in Hanoi next week with US President Donald Trump, two sources with direct knowledge of security and logistics planning told Reuters yesterday.

It could take Mr Kim at least 2½ days to travel the thousands of kilometres through China by train, from the North Korean capital of Pyongyang to Vietnam, meaning that he would have to set off later this week in time for his planned arrival on Monday.

Mr Kim's train will stop at the Vietnamese border station of Dong Dang, where he will disembark and travel 170km to Hanoi by car, the sources said.

Mr Kim and Mr Trump will meet in the Vietnamese capital from Feb 27 to 28, eight months after a historic summit in Singapore on June 12 last year.

Mr Kim's newly appointed nuclear negotiator, Mr Kim Hyok Chol, arrived in Hanoi yesterday, a Reuters witness and a source said.

Separately, three other sources told Reuters that the preferred location for the meeting between the leaders is the Government Guesthouse, a colonial-era government building in central Hanoi.

The journey



BY TRAIN:
Pyongyang → Dong Dang
• Passing by Beijing and Nanning



BY CAR:
Dong Dang → Hanoi
• 170km drive



BY AIR:
Pyongyang → Hanoi
• Around 4 hours (chartered)



STRAITS TIMES GRAPHICS

All five sources who spoke to Reuters said the plans were subject to change.

The Metropole Hotel, opposite the Government Guesthouse, will be a backup location for the summit, two of the sources said.

Last Saturday, a Reuters witness saw Mr Kim Jong Un's close aide, Mr Kim Chang Son, visiting the

Government Guesthouse and the Metropole and Melia hotels. The North Korean leader could possibly stay in the Melia hotel during his visit, one of the sources said.

Travel by train has been a preferred mode of transport for Mr Kim Jong Un, his father Kim Jong Il, and grandfather Kim Il Sung. REUTERS

With days to go before the highly anticipated second meeting between United States President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un takes place in Hanoi, the summit venue has sparked a fervent guessing game.

Just like in Singapore last year, when the two leaders shook hands for the first time, the meeting location will be kept under wraps until the last minute.

Surveillance on Hanoi-based dissidents has been stepped up and security ramped up across the Vietnamese capital.

Vietnam, having hosted the World Economic Forum on Asean last year and the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (Apec) meeting in 2017, is no stranger to big-name events. Apart from boosting Vietnam's diplomatic stature, the Feb 27 to 28 meeting throws the spotlight on the distinct ties it has with the US as well as North Korea that make Hanoi a suitable host at a time when the world is looking for more concrete steps towards the denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula.

"Vietnam is emerging as an important partner with the United States in South-east Asia at a time when much of the region is inwardly focused, so hosting this summit would enhance Vietnam's image as an important strategic player," Mr Murray Hiebert, a senior associate of the South-east Asia Programme at the US-based Centre for Strategic and International Studies, told The Straits Times recently.

In neighbouring Cambodia, for instance, officials are bristling over US criticism on the detention of an opposition leader after last year's lopsided election. Myanmar, grappling with the fallout of violence in its western Rakhine state, is shutting out critics.

In contrast, Vietnam has steadily reached out to its former war foe to protect its biggest export market and widen its diplomatic options as it tussles with China over ownership of islands in the South China Sea.

Communist Party chief Nguyen Phu Trong, arguably the most powerful man in Vietnam since he also became President last year, broke ground in 2015 by meeting then US President Barack Obama at the White House. Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc, who hosted Mr Obama in Hanoi in 2016, was the first Asean leader to visit the White House after Mr Trump was inaugurated in 2017.

Meanwhile, much has been said about how fraternal ties between Vietnam and North Korea, which supported communist troops during the Vietnam War, could grow into something more like a mentorship should Mr Kim be looking for a way to liberalise the North Korean economy without

For now, Vietnam's busy industrial zones and bustling shopping malls may prove draws enough for Mr Kim. According to Reuters, he may visit the country's manufacturing base of Bac Ninh and the industrial port town of Hai Phong after he arrives on Monday.

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Blk 190 Lor 6 Toa Payoh #01-510	6259 2135
Chinatown Point 133 New Bridge Road #B1-36	6694 8616
United Square #B1-26/27, 101 Thomson Rd	6258 9616
City Square Mall #B1-28, 180 Kitchener Rd	6636 5973
ZhongShan Mall #01-22/23, 20 Ah Hood Rd	6694 6517
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WORLD



VLADIMIR PUTIN
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UPSET AND FRUSTRATED

It's a bit upsetting and frustrating. I feel like it's a bit unjust on me and my son.



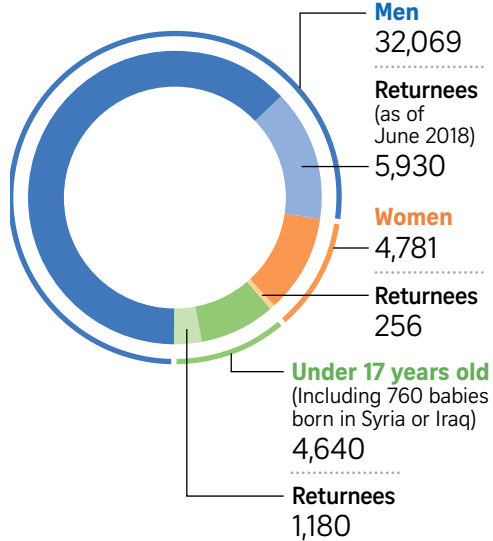
MS SHAMIMA BEGUM (above), who ran away when she was just 15 and recently gave birth to a baby boy in a refugee camp in Syria. She said she was shocked that the British Home Office was planning to revoke her citizenship.

ISIS foreign fighters, supporters and their children

According to a study published by the International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation last year, some 41,490 citizens from 80 countries travelled to Syria and Iraq to join ISIS and fight, to accompany and support fighters, or were taken there as children.

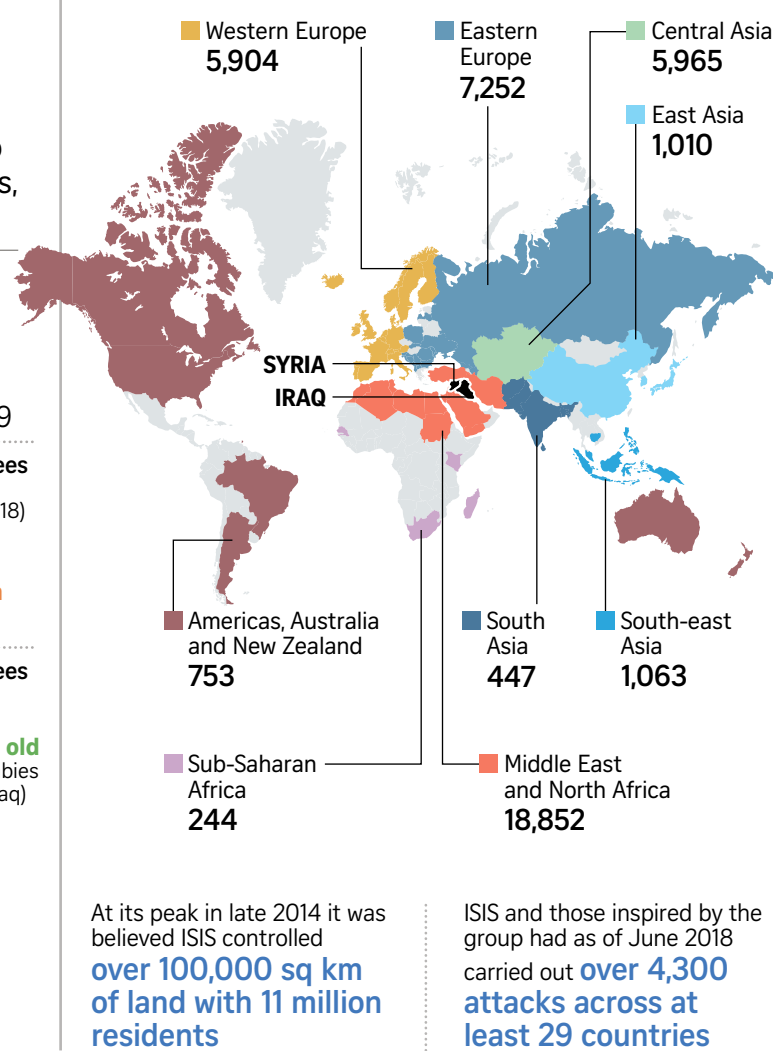
TOTAL FOR 2013-2018

Foreigners who went to join ISIS in Syria and Iraq



While women made up 13 per cent of ISIS affiliates, they only accounted for **4 per cent of returnees as of June 2018**

WHERE THEY CAME FROM



Sources: FROM DAESH TO 'DIASPORA': TRACING THE WOMEN AND MINORS OF ISLAMIC STATE, AFP STRAITS TIMES GRAPHICS



Hoda Muthana, who left Alabama four years ago, says she is deeply sorry and wants to return home. PHOTO: THE NEW YORK TIMES

Two American wives of ISIS militants want to return home

AL-HAWL CAMP (Syria) • She was a 20-year-old college student in Alabama who had become convinced of the righteousness of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS). So she duped her parents into thinking she was going on a college trip and instead bought a plane ticket to Turkey with her tuition money.

After being smuggled into the caliphate, student Hoda Muthana posted a photograph on Twitter showing her gloved hands holding her American passport.

"Bonfire soon," she promised. That was more than four years ago. Now, after being married to three ISIS fighters and witnessing executions such as those she had once cheered on social media, Muthana says she is deeply sorry and wants to return home to the United States.

She surrendered last month to the coalition forces fighting ISIS and now spends her days as a detainee in a refugee camp in north-eastern Syria.

She was joined there by another woman, Kimberly Gwen Polman, 46, who had studied legal administration in Canada before joining the caliphate and possesses dual US and Canadian citizenship.

Both women, interviewed by The New York Times at the camp, said they were trying to figure out how to have their passports re-issued and how to win the sympathy of the two nations they scorned.

Polman, who was born in Hamilton, Ontario, to an American mother and Canadian father, said, "I don't have words for how much regret I have."

In a tweet this weekend, US President Donald Trump criticised allies, including Britain, France and Germany, for not taking back hundreds of ISIS prisoners captured on the battlefield.

He made no mention of American women who had married ISIS fighters and whom the US had not taken home.

Both Muthana and Polman said they had not been visited by US officials since their capture last month.

A small number of Americans – as few as 59, according to data tracked by the George Washington University programme on extremism – are known to have travelled to Syria to join ISIS.

Nearly all the American men captured in battle have been repatriated, but it is unclear why some of the American women and their children – at least 13 known to The Times – have not been.

A spokesman for the FBI declined to comment on the two cases, but said agents would typically work to build a criminal case against any American who joined ISIS, a designated terrorist organisation.

Mr Robert Palladino, a spokesman for the State Department, described on Tuesday the situation for Americans in Syria as "extremely complicated". He said "we're looking into these cases to better understand the details", but declined to comment further, cit-

ing privacy and security concerns. A Canadian government official said it could be difficult for Canadians detained in Syria to leave the region because they were likely to face serious charges in neighbouring countries.

Citing the many crimes committed by ISIS, Mr Seamus Hughes, deputy director of the George Washington programme, said there were "thousands of legitimate reasons to question the sincerity" of appeals like those of Muthana and Polman.

"The foreign women of the Islamic State, while often reduced to simplistic narratives about 'jihadi brides', 'brainwashing' and 'online grooming', aided and abetted many of these atrocities and in some cases directly perpetrated them," he said.

Muthana and Polman acknowledged that many Americans would question whether they deserved to be allowed back home after joining one of the world's deadliest terrorist groups.

"How do you go from burning a passport to crying yourself to sleep because you have so much deep regret? How do you do that?" Polman asked. "How do you show people that?"

The two women, a generation apart, met and befriended each other in the final pocket of the caliphate, which by last month consisted of less than 15 sq km.

They began talking about making a run for it. Last month, Muthana said, she decided to give it a try.

All she took was her baby and his stroller, she said. Days later, Polman followed and surrendered as well.

Weeks later, after having no contact from the American or Canadian authorities, they got in touch with a lawyer, who is trying to help navigate their return to North America.

Muthana gave a handwritten note to the lawyer.

"I realised how I didn't appreciate or maybe even really understand how important the freedoms that we have in America are. I do now," she wrote. "To say that I regret my past words, any pain that I caused my family and any concerns I would cause my country would be hard for me to really express properly." NYTIMES

FILLED WITH REGRET

How do you go from burning a passport to crying yourself to sleep because you have so much deep regret? How do you do that? How do you show people that?



KIMBERLY GWEN POLMAN, who has dual US and Canadian citizenship.

Runaway ISIS teen to lose British citizenship

Woman's family considering legal challenge after they are told of move to strip her status

LONDON • The British government has told the family of Shamima Begum, a 19-year-old woman who travelled to Syria to marry an Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) fighter four years ago, that it intends to revoke her citizenship, according to a family lawyer.

Through a statement released by lawyer Tasnime Akunjee, Begum's family said it was "very disappointed with the Home Office's intention to have an order made depriving Shamima of her citizenship".

"We are considering all legal avenues to challenge this decision," it added.

Begum told ITV News she was "a bit shocked" after learning of the move.

"It's a bit upsetting and frustrating. I feel like it's a bit unjust on me and my son."

In a letter sent to Ms Begum's mother and obtained by broadcaster ITV News, the British Home Office said the decision had been made by Home Secretary Sajid Javid on Tuesday.

The office did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Begum will be allowed to appeal against the order through the courts, according to the letter. She is not known to have citizenship in any other nation.

It is unclear what her fate would be if she were to ultimately lose her British citizenship.

In 2015, Begum, who is from the Bethnal Green area of East London and was then 15, made headlines when she travelled to Syria with two classmates at the height of ISIS' power in the region.

The three young women flew to Turkey from Gatwick Airport and then boarded a bus to the Syrian border. They soon became the poster girls for young Westerners looking to join the group.

Begum, heavily pregnant, was recently found by a British reporter in a refugee camp in Syria after the teen fled from the last ISIS stronghold in the country.

Last week, she told the reporter she wanted to return home to Britain.

Days later, she gave birth to a baby boy.

Earlier this week, Mr Javid wrote an op-ed article for Britain's The Sunday Times in which he vowed to stop those who had joined the ISIS from returning to Britain, saying the Home Office could bar non-British citizens from entry to the country, or strip "dangerous individuals" of their British citizenship.

He said the office had used those deprivation powers more than 100 times.

"As Home Secretary, my priority is to ensure the safety and security of this country – and I will not let anything jeopardise that," he wrote.

"These are not judgments to be taken based purely on emotion and empathy. We look at the facts of each case, the law and the threat to national security."

NYTIMES, AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE



A file photo of Shamima Begum taken at the Gatwick Airport in 2015 when she was 15. She fled to Turkey from the airport with two classmates and boarded a bus to the Syrian border. She was recently found by a British reporter in a refugee camp in Syria. PHOTO: EPA-EFE

No sign S'poreans in Syria plan to return: MHA

At least three Singaporeans are known to have travelled to Syria to join the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) terror group, two of them with their families.

In its latest Singapore Terrorism Threat Assessment Report, released at the end of last month, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) said there are no indications that Haja Fakkurudeen Usman Ali, 42, and Maimunah Abdul Kadir, 50, intend to return to Singapore.

The third, Megat Shahdan Abdul Samad, is believed, based on available information, to have been killed, the report said.

Megat, who would have been 40, was featured in two ISIS propaganda videos in 2017.

Maimunah, who is married to a Malaysian, travelled to Syria with her two Singaporean children

from a previous marriage.

Haja, who was a manager in a local supermarket, is a former Indian national who received Singapore citizenship in 2008 and travelled to Syria in 2014 with his Singaporean wife and three children.

The Singapore Constitution allows a naturalised citizen to be deprived of his citizenship if "he has shown himself to be disloyal or disaffected towards Singapore", or has "been engaged in any activities which are prejudicial to the security of Singapore".

An Indian national and former Singapore PR who abetted and assisted Haja, system analyst Gul Mohamed Maracachi Maracachi, was investigated in 2014. He was deported and banned from entering Singapore for his role in abetting and aiding Haja.

Huawei issue opens rift between US, Europe telcos

US industry body urges caution in 5G network roll-out for Europe

WASHINGTON • A group representing top US mobile service providers urged European counterparts to be cautious in their roll-out of 5G networks, amid alleged security threats from Huawei Technologies, ahead of a conference that will highlight a US-Europe divide on the issue.

A Feb 14 release from GSMA, a London-based wireless industry group, had advised European lawmakers to think carefully about decisions that could delay the roll-out across the continent.

The statement, while not referring to Huawei directly, was clearly pointing to growing pressure on European telecommunications companies not to use the Chinese equipment supplier.

But CTIA, a Washington-based group, responded on Tuesday with its own statement, saying the GSMA “does not represent the views of all wireless operators or all regions”.

The European carriers offered to cooperate with their governments in devising steps to ward off vulnerabilities.

CTIA, with members that include US market leaders AT&T and Verizon Communications, has urged US regulators to go slow in crafting rules on equipment security.

“It looks like they’re scared of the impact of European policymaking on the roll-out of their 5G networks” that will offer advanced speeds, said Ms Gigi Sohn, a fellow

at the Georgetown University Law Centre Institute for Technology Law and Policy, of the US group.

“It seems they’re concerned that if Europe does so, it would become the de facto standard.”

A GSMA spokesman said in an e-mail on Tuesday its “initial statement was clearly focused on activity in Europe and does not reflect the views of all GSMA members globally”.

The group says it represents the interests of mobile operators worldwide. The group lists AT&T and Verizon as members.

The United States government is increasing the size of its usual delegation to the GSMA’s annual industry conference, MWC Barcelona, to be held next week.

Huawei is also bolstering its presence at the event, setting the scene for a showdown as both sides try to win over the chief executives of the world’s biggest carriers.

The US and China clashed last Saturday at a security conference in Munich over whether Huawei’s equipment should be banned from future 5G networks.

US Vice-President Mike Pence said the company is required to turn over data to Beijing’s security officials.

Chinese Politburo member Yang Jiechi was up next on the same stage, and said his country’s law does not require companies to collect intelligence. He urged Europeans to consider whether the US had their interests at heart or its own.

Shenzhen-based Huawei has denied wrongdoing and long main-

GSMA, a London-based wireless industry group, had advised European lawmakers to think carefully about decisions that could delay the 5G network roll-out across the continent... But CTIA, a Washington-based group, responded that the GSMA “does not represent the views of all wireless operators or all regions”.

tained it does not have back doors for the Chinese government, pointing out that no one has provided evidence to support such concerns.

CTIA did not specify what was objectionable in GSMA’s 800-word statement. “We can achieve our 5G ambitions with a secure global supply chain that reflects national secu-

rity concerns,” CTIA said. “We caution against a patchwork approach of different rules for different regions, which would result in less competition in supply chains.”

GSMA on Feb 14 said “mobile operators are ready to work with European agencies in charge of promoting certification and security requirements”.

It recommended that “governments and mobile operators work together to agree” on a testing and certification regime for Europe.

It also noted that “actions that disrupt the equipment supply for the various segments of the network – access, transport and core – will increase costs to European operators, businesses and citizens; delay 5G deployment by years across Europe; and potentially also jeopardise the functioning of existing 4G networks, upon which 5G is intended to be built”.

Restricting access to a network equipment maker would handicap Europe’s progress in developing artificial intelligence, the Internet of Things and so-called big data, the

group of over 750 operators said.

However, Ericsson chief executive officer Borje Ekholm pushed back on notions that restrictions on Chinese competitor Huawei Technologies would deprive European operators of the only vendor capable of delivering 5G equipment in Europe.

While it is true there is a risk Europe could fall behind on 5G, “it is not true that this is because European service providers lack access to the right technology”, Mr Ekholm said in a blog post.

“We are already deploying commercial 5G equipment with front-runner customers in front-runner markets and we will be there when the time is right for 5G in each market.”

Mr Eric Mangan, a spokesman for Nokia, stressed that the company has the ability to upgrade 4G equipment from any vendor to 5G, and that, like Ericsson, it is already building the new infrastructure for customers. That includes in the US market, where Huawei is effectively shut out. BLOOMBERG

Huawei smartphones at a Deutsche Telekom store in Bonn, Germany. GSMA, a London-based wireless industry group, had recommended that “governments and mobile operators work together to agree” on a testing and certification regime for Europe. PHOTO: REUTERS



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March 1 deadline for trade deal with China not ‘magical’: Trump

US President again hints at being open to pushing back deadline

WASHINGTON • US President Donald Trump said trade talks with China were going well and again suggested he was open to pushing back the deadline to complete negotiations, saying March 1 was not a “magical” date.

Tariffs on US\$200 billion (\$270 billion) worth of Chinese imports are scheduled to rise to 25 per cent from 10 per cent by March 1 if the world’s two largest economies do not settle their trade dispute, but Mr Trump has suggested several times that he would be open to postponing the deadline.

“They are very complex talks. They’re going very well,” Mr Trump told reporters in the Oval Office on Tuesday.

“I can’t tell you exactly about timing, but the date is not a magical date. A lot of things can happen.”

Mr Trump said the real question would be whether the United States would raise the tariffs as planned.

“I know that China would like not

for that to happen, so I think they’re trying to move fast so that doesn’t happen.”

On Tuesday, the US and China launched a new round of talks in Washington, with follow-up sessions at a higher level scheduled for later in the week. The negotiations followed a week of talks in Beijing that ended last week without a deal but which officials said had yielded progress on some key issues.

Bloomberg reported on Tuesday that the US, as part of a trade deal, was seeking to secure a pledge from China that it would not devalue its yuan currency.

COMPLEX TALKS

They are very complex talks. They’re going very well... I can’t tell you exactly about timing, but the date is not a magical date. A lot of things can happen.

MR DONALD TRUMP, on the trade talks.

Officials from the two countries are discussing how to address the currency policy in a “memorandum of understanding” that would form the basis of a US-China trade deal, the news agency reported, citing unnamed people involved in and briefed on the discussions.

US Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin had told Reuters last October that currency issues must be part of US-China trade negotiations, adding that Chinese officials told him further depreciation of the yuan “was not in their interests”.

The Bloomberg report said the US request for a pledge to keep the yuan’s value stable was aimed at neutralising any effort by Beijing to devalue its currency to counter American tariffs.

Two days of negotiations between deputy-level officials began on Tuesday, led by Deputy US Trade Representative Jeffrey Gerish on the American side. Higher-level talks, involving Mr Mnuchin and led by US Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer, are expected to begin today.

This week’s talks were aimed at “achieving needed structural changes in China that affect trade between the United States and China. The two sides will also discuss China’s pledge to purchase a substantial amount of goods and services from the United States”, the White House said in a statement issued late on Monday.

Mr Trump, who is eager for a deal and has praised his counterpart, Chinese President Xi Jinping – while also insisting on structural changes to China’s practices related to intellectual property and forced technology transfers by firms doing business there – emphasised that progress was being made.

“I can only say that the talks with China on trade have gone very, very well,” he said. REUTERS

SEE OPINION A25

Respect our right to grow and prosper, Beijing official tells US delegates

BEIJING • The United States should respect China’s right to develop and become prosperous, the Chinese government’s top diplomat told a visiting US delegation, reiterating that the Asian power’s doors to the outside world would open wider.

The world’s two largest economies began their latest round of trade talks this week to resolve a bitter dispute in which each has levied tariffs on imports from the other.

The US has accused China of unfair trade practices, including forced technology transfers, charges it has denied.

Respect and cooperation are the correct choice for both countries, something the international community hopes to see, State Councillor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi told the delegation of US business leaders and former officials in Beijing on Tuesday.

“Just like the United States, China also has the right to development, and the Chinese people also have the right to have a good life,” the foreign ministry paraphrased Mr Wang as saying, in a statement issued yesterday.

“The US side should recognise that China’s development is in the world’s interest, as well as the United States’. Only by seeing China’s development as an opportunity for the United States can this help resolve certain problems, including trade and economic ones,” Mr Wang said.

China’s reform and steps to open up are in line with its development needs, and its doors to the outside world will open ever wider, he added, repeating previous government pledges.

“As long as China and the United States proactively meet each other halfway, then trade and economic cooperation can still play a role as a ballast stone in Sino-US ties,” he said.

The US delegation included former national security adviser Stephen Hadley, US Chamber of Commerce executive vice-president Myron Brilliant and US Chamber of Commerce China Centre president Jeremie Waterman.

The Global Times, published by the ruling Chinese Communist Party’s official People’s Daily, said in an editorial yesterday that both sides must remain calm during the current talks, but that Washington must not force anything on Beijing.

“US demand for China’s structural reform must stay in line with China-US trade cooperation and coordinate with China’s reform and opening-up. The talks must not try to force Beijing to change its economic governance or even its development path,” it said.

“China and the US must sign an agreement that will inspire their people, heralding accelerated economic development.”

REUTERS



Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi said that his country’s doors to the outside world will open ever wider.



Golfers at Hong Kong’s exclusive Fanling golf course tee off to views of construction as lawmakers seek to increase housing supply in the densely populated city. The government will take back 32ha of land, nearly a fifth, from the golf course as early as 2023 to build homes, of which the bulk will be public housing. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Exclusive HK golf course to lose land to public housing

Claire Huang
Hong Kong Correspondent

Hong Kong leader Carrie Lam now has the muscle to push through contentious proposals that would boost housing supply, including taking back part of an iconic golf course and a massive land reclamation off Lantau island.

This comes after lawmakers in the Executive Council “fully endorsed” eight suggestions put up by a government-appointed land supply task force to look into ways to ease the city’s housing crunch, which has made it the world’s least affordable property market.

Secretary for Development Michael Wong said at a press briefing yesterday afternoon that the government would push through with all eight suggestions of the task force.

The announcement comes nearly two months after the task force submitted its report to the government, in which it suggested ways to generate some 3,000ha of

land for development.

Describing this as “not an easy decision”, Mr Wong said the government would take back 32ha of the exclusive 172ha Fanling golf course, home to the Hong Kong Golf Club, to build homes, of which the bulk would be public housing.

To ease the transition, Mr Wong said the government would take the land back three years after the current lease ends in August 2020. Construction could begin as early as 2024.

The remaining 140ha of the golf course would remain untouched and the lease would be extended until mid-2027.

The development bureau would conduct a detailed study in the later half of the year to look into the number of units that could be built, the development timeline and the amount of funding needed.

The study, to wrap up in the first half of 2021, would also explore the environmental and ecological impact of developing this land.

The proposal to take back part of the golf course has had golfers fuming as they said it would hinder deal-making since many bankers and businessmen play the sport.

NO PAINLESS SOLUTION

The decision of the CE (Chief Executive Lam) in the council reflects a very careful balance of the needs of the community in the short to medium term for more housing, in particular public housing, and also the contributions of Fanling golf course to golf development in Hong Kong and also to its uniqueness in terms of ecological value, historical value... So that’s a balancing act and I hope the community can understand that.

SECRETARY FOR DEVELOPMENT
MICHAEL WONG

ing as they said it would hinder deal-making since many bankers and businessmen play the sport.

Said Mr Wong: “As the chairman of the task force said, there’s no painless solution.

“The decision of the CE (Chief Executive Lam) in the council reflects a very careful balance of the needs of the community in the short to medium term for more housing, in particular public housing, and also the contributions of Fanling golf course to golf development in Hong Kong, and also to its uniqueness in terms of ecological value, historical value... So that’s a balancing act and I hope the community can understand that.”

The government would also ask the Housing Society to end an ongoing study into building homes around country parks – an idea pitched by the previous administration.

It would also start feasibility studies on converting brown field sites and a land reclamation project east of Lantau island.

In October last year, Mrs Lam pitched a plan in her policy address to reclaim 1,700ha of land to build man-made islands off Lantau, known as the Lantau Tomorrow Vision.

The idea, reported to carry a price tag of at least HK\$500 billion (\$87 billion), was met with waves of criticism from environmentalists and opposition lawmakers, who slammed it for the exorbitant cost and potential damage to marine life.

Under the task force’s proposal, the artificial islands near Kau Yi Chau would provide sizeable pieces of land.

“That’s the vision. That hasn’t changed yet,” said Mr Wong.

He added: “We will focus our efforts on the 1,000ha of land to be reclaimed around Kau Yi Chau. With regards to the 700ha of land around Hei Ling Chau, at the moment, there’s no timetable.”

Both Kau Yi Chau and Hei Ling Chau are sparsely inhabited islands.

huangjy@sph.com.sg

Peace deal only when China stops threats, says Tsai

TAIPEI • Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen said yesterday no formal peace deal could be signed with China until leaders in Beijing rule out using force against the island.

Ms Tsai was speaking a day after she confirmed she would run for re-election early next year despite falling ratings and an increasingly strained relationship with China.

She was responding to recent comments by Mr Wu Den-yih, head of the main opposition Kuomintang (KMT), that his party would pursue a peace treaty with Beijing if it were to regain power next year.

“There would be no so-called negotiation on equal footing and no real peace as China refuses to give up the use of force against Taiwan and forcefully pushes the ‘one country, two systems’ framework,” Ms Tsai said.

“China’s military intentions and its refusal to give up the use of force against Taiwan is a real source of regional instability and a threat to regional peace,” she added.

“One country, two systems” is China’s proposal to absorb Taiwan into the mainland but allow it to keep some of its freedoms.

Beijing has made its dislike of Ms Tsai and her independence-leaning Democratic Progressive Party clear.

After her election in 2016, it cut communication with her administration, stepped up military drills and poached several of Taiwan’s dwindling diplomatic allies.

Chinese President Xi Jinping reiterated in a speech last month that China would not renounce the option of using military force to bring Taiwan into the fold, describing unification with the mainland as “inevitable”.

A KMT win in 2020 would likely please leaders in Beijing given the much closer relationship it forged with the previous administration of Mr Ma Ying-jeou.

Mr Ma suggested in 2011 that Taiwan should consider a peace treaty with China within the coming decade, to formally bring an end to a civil war that has actually been over for 70 years.

The proposal sparked criticism from detractors that it would be tantamount to a unification or surrender treaty.

Ms Tsai said she believed voters would balk at the proposal unless Beijing withdrew its threats.

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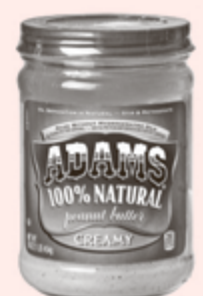
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A performer dressed as the Chinese God of Fortune at a Chap Goh Meh carnival in Jakarta on Tuesday. Many such celebrations were held across Indonesia to mark the 15th and last day of Chinese New Year. Before President Suharto's fall in 1998, the Chinese in the Muslim-majority country were banned from celebrating such festivals. PHOTO: ANTARA FOTO

News analysis

Ethnic Chinese votes a political dilemma for election candidates

Their votes count in tight race, but candidates must also appease conservatives



Francis Chan

Indonesia Bureau Chief
In Jakarta

It was a scene straight out of Chinese mythology, complete with hundreds of performers in elaborate costumes re-enacting Taoist folklore freely on the streets of Padang, West Sumatra.

Elsewhere, from Jakarta to Singkawang in West Kalimantan on Borneo island, devotees openly took part in rituals and festivities at Chinese temples on Tuesday to mark Chap Goh Meh, the 15th and last day of Chinese New Year.

This was not always the case for the ethnic Chinese in Indonesia.

Before the fall of President Suharto in 1998, the Chinese in the Muslim-majority country were banned from celebrating such festivals, while speaking Chinese dialects in public was also prohibited.

More than 20 years after the strongman's New Order regime ended, *Imlek* – or what Chinese New Year is known as here – is now gazetted as a national holiday.

However, prejudice against Chinese Indonesians continues today amid rising intolerance in the country, which was manifested in the ugliest of ways less than two years ago, just before former Jakarta governor Basuki Tjahaja Purnama, an ethnic Chinese who is also Christian, was jailed for blasphemy

against Islam.

At the time, Muslim conservatives rallied against the double-minority politician with a series of street protests that threatened to destabilise the capital during a highly divisive gubernatorial race, which Mr Basuki eventually lost in early 2017.

While racial and religious conflicts have not taken hold in the current election campaigns for the presidency and legislature as they did during the Jakarta gubernatorial polls, an awkward tension remains in the lead-up to the April 17 elections.

Many believe that Mr Basuki, best known as Ahok, had slipped away quietly after his high-profile release from prison last month, to avoid jeopardising the re-election of his close ally, President Joko Widodo.

While Mr Basuki remains popular among the moderates and other minorities, he is still regarded by certain parties as politically toxic, in part due to his race and faith.

It is no secret that minority Chinese politicians in Indonesia tend to be big targets for their detractors.

Earlier this year, a politician of Chinese descent filed a police report against an Indonesian Ulama Council official for labelling the Chinese characters in his campaign posters as hate speech.

"The Chinese characters form my Chinese name. I don't know why that's such a problem," said Mr Heriandi Lim, who is from the National Awakening Party, an Islam-based political party, no less.

According to Mr Lim, who is running to be an MP in Jakarta, three other legislative candidates were similarly attacked by the same official on social media.

The participation of ethnic Chinese Indonesians in domestic politics is not a new phenomenon, but it remains coloured by fears of the communist agenda from the old Suharto era.

Aside from deep-seated suspicion, there is also a strong feeling of resentment towards Chinese Indonesians in some quarters, particularly over their perceived wealth at the expense of the Muslim working class in the country.

Eurasia Group, a political risk consultancy, said in a report last year that it is this growing belief that Muslims are "victims of economic and political injustice" that has empowered Islamists of late. According to the report, domestic groups such as the Islamic Defenders Front, which was behind the anti-Ahok protests, want to roll back protections for minorities in the country.

The influence such groups wield has already made an impact on political decisions at the highest levels, with many observers seeing

Such is the state of Indonesian elections today, where race, religion and identity politics have become the focal points of a candidate's strategy to win.

Mr Joko's decision to pick senior Muslim cleric Ma'ruf Amin as his running mate as a move to neutralise any potential threats to his own Islamic credentials.

So do the votes of Chinese Indonesians, or any other minority, even matter in these elections?

Despite Chinese Indonesians making up less than 2 per cent of the more than 192 million eligible voters at the April elections, their support will be crucial in a tight race, said Professor Leo Suryadinata, a visiting senior fellow at ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute.

"Their economic power is much stronger than the numbers indicate (and) wealthy Chinese Indonesians are often given much attention by presidential candidates as they are able to provide financial support to them," he added.

Indeed, both the President, who goes by his popular moniker Jokowi, and his election rival, former army general Prabowo Subianto, have recently been seen courting Chinese voters actively.

Some observers have said that it may not be entirely accurate to presume that a reform-minded president like Mr Joko, who has had to fight accusations that he is half-Chinese and pro-China, would naturally attract the lion's share of Chinese support.

"Others who have been unable to enjoy benefits under the Jokowi administration are also hoping that a different government could make life easier for them," said Prof Leo, who added that Mr Prabowo knows this, and hence has been working hard to shake off his perceived anti-Chinese image.

Still, all election candidates will need to be mindful of how their efforts to garner the support of Chinese Indonesians will play out in the minds of conservative voters, as they grapple with this political dilemma.

Such is the state of Indonesian elections today, where race, religion and identity politics have become the focal points of a candidate's strategy to win.

Referring to them as a disease, constitutional law expert Mahfud M.D., who was once poised to contest for the vice-presidency with Mr Joko, on Tuesday called for efforts to ease tensions instead of playing up hostilities.

"These elections have led to quarrels between supporters, between followers of this religion and that religion, members of this tribe and that tribe, and members of this race and that race," the former justice chief said at a public dialogue on nationalism.

"We need to calm down before it infects the nation."

tkchan@sph.com.sg

Malaysian cop convicted of Mongolian's murder loses asylum bid

SYDNEY • A fugitive Malaysian policeman convicted of the grisly murder of a Mongolian model has lost a bid for asylum in Australia, where he has been held since 2015, raising the prospect that he could be deported.

Sirul Azhar Umar and another police officer, Azilah Hadri, were sentenced to death after being found guilty in Malaysia of the murder of 28-year-old Altantuya Shaariibuu, an interpreter to a former associate of former prime minister Najib Razak.

Ms Shaariibuu was probably blown up with explosives in a forest on the outskirts of Malaysia's capital in 2006, court records quote a forensic pathologist as saying, in a case shrouded in mystery 13 years later. Sirul was arrested and has been held in an Australian immigration detention centre since January 2015, after fleeing Malaysia shortly before the verdict was handed down.

He lost his bid for asylum on Monday when the Administrative Appeals Tribunal in Sydney upheld an earlier ruling that he had committed a "non-political" crime in Malaysia and so was not entitled to protection in Australia.

"None of the findings made by the courts in Malaysia suggested that the crime in question was a political one," Tribunal Deputy President Brian Rayment said in a written decision first reported by Australian media yesterday.

Sirul can appeal but his lawyers said they had not yet been instructed to do so. Nor had Sirul been served with any extradition request or deportation notice, they said. Sirul could not be reached for comment.

He and Azilah were serving as members of Najib's personal security detail at the time of the murder, but the question of who ordered the killing has never been answered.

Since Najib's spectacular defeat at last year's general election, Malaysian police have re-opened the case and Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad has said his government could revoke Sirul's death penalty to make way for his extradition.

Under Australian law, Sirul can be deported only if he does not face the death penalty. A spokesman for the Australian Attorney-General said the government did not comment publicly on extradition cases.

Civil society groups have alleged that Ms Shaariibuu's murder was linked to her role as an interpreter for Abdul Razak Baginda, a former associate of Najib, in Malaysia's purchase of two Scorpene-class submarines from French shipbuilding giant DCNS in 2002. The deal was mired in allegations of bribery and kickbacks.

She had also been having an affair with Abdul Razak, a close confidante of Najib, who was Malaysia's deputy prime minister and defence minister at the time of the murder. Najib has denied knowing Ms Shaariibuu or playing any role in her death. REUTERS



Sirul Azhar Umar has been held in Australia since 2015. He and another officer were found guilty of murdering Ms Altantuya Shaariibuu in 2006. PHOTO: CHINA PRESS

Sirul can appeal but his lawyers said they had not yet been instructed to do so. Nor had Sirul been served with any extradition request or deportation notice, they said.

Malaysia's defence ministry lost over \$160m from land swop deals: Minister

PETALING JAYA • Malaysia's defence ministry has lost more than RM500 million (S\$166 million) due to several swop deals involving land valued at RM4.75 billion, said Defence Minister Mohamad Sabu.

Mr Mohamad said his ministry has received a report from the Governance, Procurement and Finance

Investigating Committee led by former auditor-general Ambrin Buang on the land swop deals, which was discussed in last Wednesday's Cabinet meeting.

"The committee investigated 16 deals involving 2,932 acres (1,190ha) of land belonging to the ministry. In addition to the land

value, the cost of the projects is estimated to be RM4.88 billion," he said in a statement on Tuesday.

He added that the ministry was informed that a majority of the land swop projects were implemented without detailed planning.

The selection of developer companies was also not done with due dili-

gence, he said.

When it came to the selection of the land swop locations, Mr Mohamad said there was "political interference from certain quarters".

"This resulted in parts of the projects exceeding the contractual duration initially agreed upon. Alongside this, some projects were

completed, but the construction quality is unsatisfactory," he said.

He instructed his officers to file reports with the police, the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission and relevant agencies so that investigations can be conducted.

Last April, former minister Rafidah Aziz alleged that land belong-

ing to the armed forces had been swopped by a company supposedly under the control of three key individuals.

However, former defence minister Hishammuddin Hussein denied the allegation, saying that it was an "outright lie".

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College students attending a candlelight vigil in Kolkata, India, on Tuesday to pay tribute to the more than 40 Central Reserve Police Force troops who were killed after a suicide bomber rammed an explosive-laden car into the bus carrying the officers in south Kashmir last Thursday. PHOTO: REUTERS

US urges Pakistan to punish those behind Kashmir attack

UN calls on India, Pakistan to ease tensions, offers to mediate talks

WASHINGTON • The United States threw its support behind India on Tuesday and pressed Pakistan to punish those behind a suicide attack in Kashmir that killed more than 40 Indian security troops.

This comes after United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres called on India and Pakistan to take immediate steps to defuse tensions and offered to help broker a solution if both sides agreed.

US State Department deputy spokesman Robert Palladino told reporters: "We have been in close communication with the government of India to express not only our condolences but our strong support for India as it confronts this terrorism."

He added: "We urge Pakistan to fully cooperate with the investigation into the attack and to punish anyone responsible."

Mr Palladino said the US has been in contact with both countries since a suicide attack on Feb 14 in Kashmir killed more than 40 Indian security forces, triggering counter-operations by Indian forces in the area.

The attack was claimed by the Pakistan-based Islamist group Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM).

"We call on all countries to uphold their responsibilities pursuant to the United Nations Security Council resolutions to deny safe



People lighting candles at a memorial during a vigil on Tuesday to pay tribute to those killed in last Thursday's terror attack in Kashmir. PHOTO: REUTERS

haven and support for terrorists," Mr Palladino said.

UN spokesman Stephane Dujarric, meanwhile, said the UN is "deeply concerned" at the increasing tensions between both India and Pakistan.

Mr Guterres "stresses the importance of both sides to exercise maximum restraint and take immediate steps" to de-escalate, while also offering to mediate "should both sides ask", said Mr Dujarric.

Pakistani Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi appealed to Mr Guterres to step in to defuse ten-

NO SAFE HAVEN FOR TERRORISTS

We call on all countries to uphold their responsibilities pursuant to the United Nations Security Council resolutions to deny safe haven and support for terrorists.



U.S. STATE DEPARTMENT DEPUTY SPOKESMAN ROBERT PALLADINO

sions in a letter seen by Agence France-Presse.

"It is imperative to take steps for de-escalation. The United Nations must step in to defuse tensions," said the letter sent on Monday.

Although the attack was claimed by JeM, Mr Qureshi insisted that "attributing it to Pakistan even before investigations is absurd".

In response to the rising tensions, France, Britain and the US were considering a new push at the Security Council to place JeM leader Masood Azhar on the UN terror list, but faced opposition from China, diplomats said.

China has twice blocked – in 2016 and 2017 – attempts to put the JeM leader on the blacklist.

The group itself was added to the terror list in 2001.

Kashmir has been split between India and Pakistan since independence from Britain in 1947.

Both countries claim the former Himalayan kingdom in full and have fought two wars over it.

India has long accused Pakistan of harbouring militants who launch attacks on its soil.

Pakistan's UN Ambassador, Ms Maleeha Lodhi, met Mr Guterres and the president of the Security Council to appeal for action, warning that a flare-up in Kashmir could undermine peace efforts in Afghanistan.

"The escalation in the subcontinent poses a threat to prospects for peace in Afghanistan," Ms Lodhi told AFP. AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Kashmiris in rest of India find kindness amid backlash

Debarshi Dasgupta
India Correspondent
In New Delhi

"I am speechless. I have no idea what I am going to do next," a worried Mr Salman Shaheen Charoo tells The Straits Times as he waits at the airport in Chandigarh for his flight back home in Srinagar.

A Kashmiri academic at the Lovely Professional University in Punjab, he claims he was forced to quit due to a post he made on a local university WhatsApp group.

The post had asked for an end to calls for more blood-letting in his state of Jammu and Kashmir – but it was doctored with comments laying blame on India for last week's attack in Pulwama.

This fake version went viral, prompting anger from many quarters – and led to a mob looking for him. He said he managed to flee, along with his Kashmiri flatmate, before the mob could locate his house.

Mr Charoo is one among a growing number of Kashmiris, many of them students and professionals living elsewhere in the country, who have faced reprisal attacks after the terror strike in the state that killed 40 paramilitary personnel.

A local Kashmiri youth had rammed an explosive-laden vehicle into a convoy of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) last Thursday.

The reprisal attacks since then have been led in many cases by Hindu right-wing groups who demand that Kashmiris be sent home.

The fear and suspicion spawned have caused hundreds of Kashmiris to give up their studies and careers, and return home.

In one instance, Mr Aabid Majeed Kuchay, a Kashmiri dean at the Alpine Group of Institutes in Dehradun, was suspended despite a lack of evidence of "anti-national" activity.

Dehradun is the capital of Uttarakhand state.

The authorities said the decision was taken under pressure from 200 to 300 youth representatives who gathered at the institute to demand the expulsion of a female student, who reportedly expressed her support for the Pulwama terrorist.

Mr Kuchay has since been asked by the institute to rejoin as soon as tension in the city subsides, according to a Times of India report.

A number of Kashmiri students in Mullana in the state of Haryana have also had to leave after the local village council reportedly asked them to vacate their rented accommodation within 24 hours.

"There are around 200 students currently stranded in Mullana, waiting for help," said Mr Ashish Soni, a volunteer with Aman Biradari Trust, an organisation offering relief to distressed Kashmiris. "We are in discussions with the local police to ensure their temporary safety and eventual safe return home."

The growing number of reprisal attacks has also prompted two former chief ministers from rival parties in the state of Jammu and Kashmir – Mr Mehbooba Mufti and Mr Omar Abdullah – to issue a joint statement expressing dismay and asking the federal government to ensure the safety of Kashmiris across the country.

"Intimidating Kashmiris is aimed at creating a wedge between different communities in India. We should not allow the terror to divide us", the two leaders said.

These attacks have also led many Indians to rally and help Kashmiris.

According to a Times of India report, in Dehradun, a group of friends drove around in their cars collecting 95 Kashmiris with support from local police, and offered temporary lodging in their houses. Indians have also offered on social media to open up their houses to Kashmiris in distress.

A group of around 20 students and working professionals in Kolkata have shared their contact details on Facebook for any Kashmiri in need of shelter.

The CRPF has also set up a helpline to aid Kashmiris outside the state.

Mr Shah Faesal, a former Kashmiri bureaucrat, said he received "hundreds of distress calls" after he offered help on social media. He feels the reprisal attacks will make Kashmiri youth more insecure.

"If there is a similar attack in future, the scale of reprisal could be even higher, leading to a complete breakdown of people-to-people relationship between Kashmir and the rest of the country," he told The Straits Times. "This will cause further alienation and intensification of the conflict in Kashmir."

debarshi@sph.com.sg

Saudi Arabia ready to share intel with India to fight terrorism: Crown Prince

NEW DELHI • Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman said yesterday terrorism was a concern for both his country and India, and that his kingdom was ready to share intelligence to tackle it.

Speaking at a joint media conference with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi in New Delhi, the Crown Prince said Saudi Arabia was ready for political cooperation with India.

"On the issue of extremism and terrorism, which is a common concern, we want to tell India that we will cooperate in every way, including intelligence-sharing," he said.

The Crown Prince's visit comes

days after a militant attack in the disputed region of Kashmir which involved a bombing of a security convoy in which more than 40 Indian paramilitary police officers were killed.

The attack was claimed by a Pakistan-based militant group.

During the media briefing, Mr Modi said he had agreed with Saudi Arabia to strengthen cooperation on counter-terrorism, naval and cyber security.

Earlier, the Crown Prince received a ceremonial welcome at New Delhi's imposing red sandstone presidential palace, where he hailed his country's ties with India,

a top consumer of Saudi crude oil.

"Today we want to be sure that this relation is maintained and improved for the sake of both countries. With the leadership of the President and the PM, I am sure we can create good things for Saudi Arabia and India," he said in brief remarks before heading to talks with Indian leaders.

India rolled out the red carpet for the Crown Prince at a time when it is trying to build diplomatic support against Pakistan following the militant attack.

The Crown Prince is also expected to visit China during a tour that will be his first through the re-

gion since the storm over the murder of Mr Jamal Khashoggi, a Washington Post columnist, at the Saudi consulate in Istanbul in October.

On Tuesday, Mr Modi broke with government protocol to welcome the Crown Prince at the airport.

Ordinarily, the Prime Minister would not receive a foreign dignitary at the airport, but instead send an official or a junior government minister.

"A new chapter in bilateral relations," Foreign Ministry spokesman Raveesh Kumar posted on Twitter, hailing Mr Modi's "breaking protocol" with a photograph of the pair warmly clapping hands by the steps of the Crown Prince's plane.

Saudi Arabia is India's top supplier of crude oil but the two countries have expanded ties beyond energy, and their governments have agreed to build a strategic partnership, India's Foreign Ministry said last week. REUTERS



Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman being welcomed at the New Delhi presidential palace yesterday by Indian President Ram Nath Kovind (centre) and Prime Minister Narendra Modi. PHOTO: EPA-EFE

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Rampant piracy spoils party for China's sci-fi blockbuster

Film's copyright battle puts spotlight on country's lax IP laws

Lim Yan Liang
China Correspondent
In Beijing

For administrative manager Lily Liu, catching home-grown sci-fi blockbuster *The Wandering Earth* at the cinema was the highlight of her Chinese New Year break.

"The special effects were truly stunning, and were nothing like the gimmicky effects in many other domestic films," said Ms Liu, 23. "I'm glad I saw it in the cinema."

Millions of Chinese did likewise: Within a fortnight, box-office takings hit 3.7 billion yuan (\$745 million), making the film China's second-highest grossing to date. The movie is based on a novella by award-winning author Liu Cixin.

But piracy of the film on China's

Internet has also been rampant, prompting the director to plead with fans to report illegal copies. The country's copyright watchdog also stepped in, following anger from the movie's fans.

The box-office hit can be seen as the latest case of China having to grapple with lax intellectual property (IP) laws at a time when it is producing more original content.

"There is a situation of pirated versions of the show appearing on the Internet. If anyone comes across such links please message our producer," the film's director, Frant Gwo, posted on his Weibo account just three days after the movie's release on Feb 5.

Despite the special-effects-laden movie's spectacular success, studio staff had little time to celebrate.

Instead, they spent the Chinese New Year holidays "complaining to the authorities about piracy and blocking pirated copies", a member of the film studio's anti-piracy team told Beijing Youth Daily.



The Wandering Earth's box-office takings hit 3.7 billion yuan (\$745 million) within a fortnight, making the film China's second-highest grossing to date. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

China's box-office clout has grown in tandem with its rising middle class. Last year, the market was worth US\$7.9 billion (\$10.7 billion), more than the next four largest markets – Japan, Britain, India and South Korea – combined.

But while the number of Chinese moviegoers continues to grow, piracy has remained a perennial

bugbear despite annual crack-downs by the authorities.

Dr Liu Xia, a law professor at Fujian University of Technology, estimated that China's movie piracy loss rate – which measures box office takings lost to piracy – has remained stubbornly high at about 55 per cent. He attributed this to the light penalties China metes out for copy-

right infringement compared with countries like the United States.

"The compensation is too light to deter pirates under China's current law," he said. He noted that most pirates are prosecuted under civil rather than criminal law, while current laws do not specify penalties for consumers.

"China should increase the compensation of any person who violates copyright laws," he added.

But things are slowly changing.

The National Copyright Administration (NCA) said in a statement on Monday that fighting film piracy will be its priority this year.

It said it has intensified the monitoring, investigation and take-down of pirated content disseminated on Chinese social media platforms like Wechat and Weibo, cloud services such as Baidu Cloud, and third-party online marketplaces like Taobao and Xianyu.

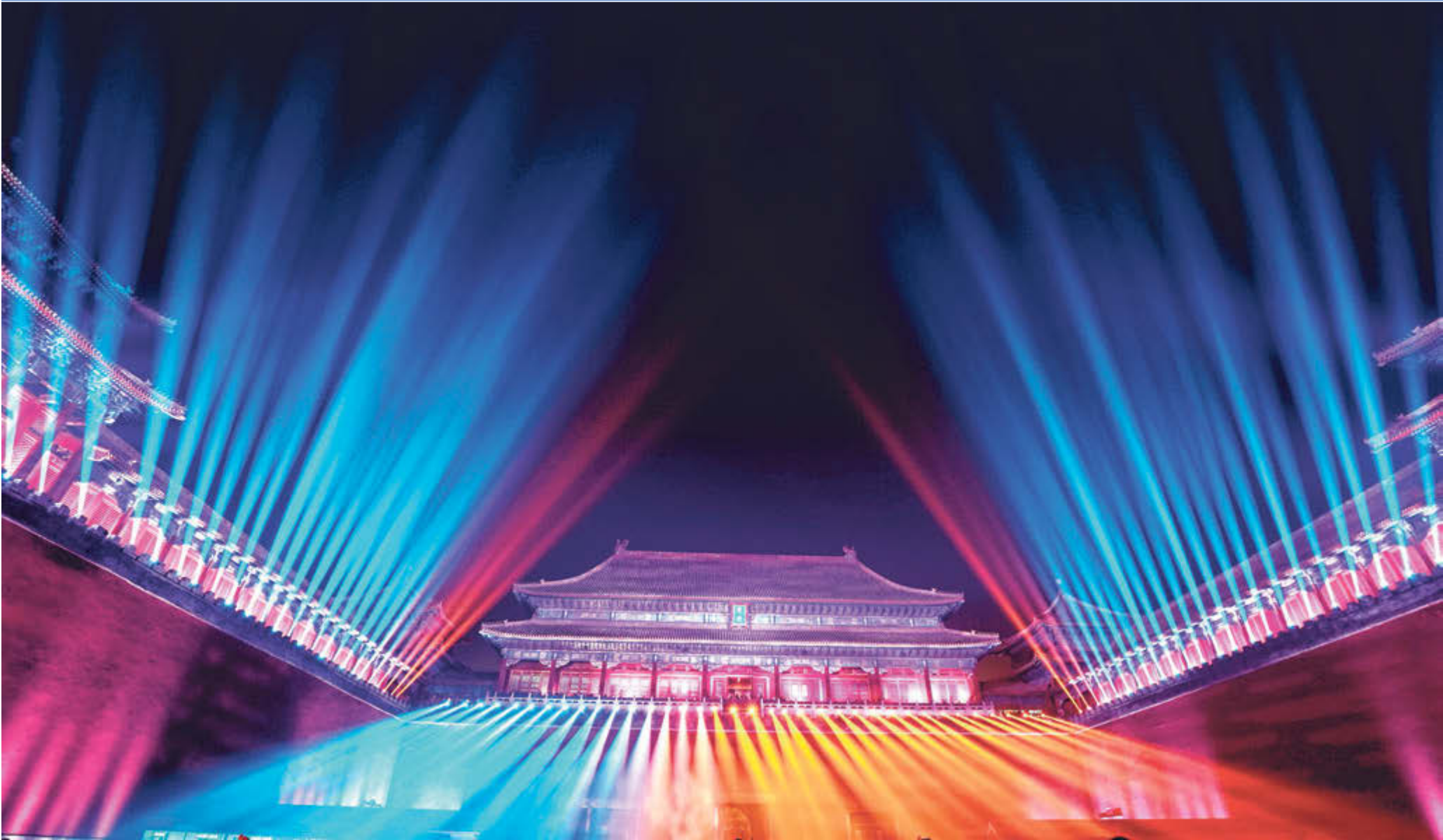
The NCA added that over the seven-day Spring Festival holiday, the authorities had taken down some 7,700 infringing links.

But, almost as quickly as they were taken down, illegal streaming and download links were up again.

A quick search of Chinese online marketplaces early this week showed that "high-definition" versions of *The Wandering Earth* and other new releases such as *Crazy Alien* were back on sale for as little as two yuan a movie.

yanliang@sph.com.sg

Forbidden City dazzles in the dark



Beijing's famed Forbidden City was illuminated at night on Tuesday for the first time since it was opened as a museum.

The light show was a celebration of the end of Chinese New Year. The sprawling former imperial palace, which marks its 600th birthday next year, was bathed in a colourful array of lights and lasers in front of 3,000 spectators.

Free tickets for the unprecedented light show had been snapped up online within minutes, crashing the Palace Museum's website as Beijingers and tourists rushed to gain access to the spectacular display. Tickets were soon being sold for up to 5,000 yuan (\$1,000) on the Internet.

The Palace Museum was due to repeat the temporary show last night as it celebrated the Lantern Festival. PHOTO: XINHUA

Warning raised for Queensland coast as cyclone moves closer

SYDNEY • Cyclone Oma, which hit the Pacific islands of Vanuatu and New Caledonia, is slowly heading towards the coast of Australia's Queensland state.

The storm, a destructive Category 2, could bring flooding, storm surges and strong winds within days to a large stretch of the coast, Australia's Bureau of Meteorology said yesterday.

The bureau said the storm's exact path was unclear and, if it does make landfall, it could be anywhere from the central Queensland coast to as far south as the border with New South Wales state.

In the early hours of yesterday, Oma produced winds of up to 185kmh but has since weakened a little.

It is forecast to remain a Category 2 storm for the next few days, the bureau said.

It is currently far off the Australian coast, having passed New Caledonia, where high winds cut electricity, destroyed crops, downed trees and shuttered schools and businesses.

New Caledonia's Civil Security agency reported on Tuesday that around 3,000 people were without



Flood waters covering a street on the Gold Coast in Queensland, Australia, yesterday as the brunt of Cyclone Oma approaches in the coming days. PHOTO: AUSTRALIAN ASSOCIATED PRESS

power and dozens of telecommunications towers were affected.

The storm also produced torrential rain in Vanuatu, where clean-up operations are under way.

"Severe tropical Cyclone Oma is expected to move slowly southwest over the Coral Sea during the next few days," the bureau said.

The storm is expected to bring "abnormally high tides" to parts of southern Queensland on Australia's east coast as it edges closer.

"A severe weather warning and hazardous surf warning are cur-

rent," the bureau said.

Some areas have already been affected by the high tides, flooding some streets and cars along beaches.

Separately, oil has started leaking from a bulk carrier stranded on a coral reef near World Heritage-listed waters in the Solomon Islands, local villagers said yesterday.

The MV Solomon Trader ran aground on Feb 5 while loading bauxite at Rennell Island but heavy seas whipped up by Cyclone Oma have thwarted salvage attempts.

Locals said the 225m vessel was

now starting to leak oil.

"We're starting to see a slick," Mr Derek Pongi told Agence France-Presse. "It's not that big but it's hard to tell because the weather's still rough."

Rennell Island, about 240km south of the capital Honiara, is the largest raised coral atoll in the world.

Mr Pongi said locals feared a major environmental disaster.

"The people here depend on the sea for all their needs," he said. "It would make life very hard for them."

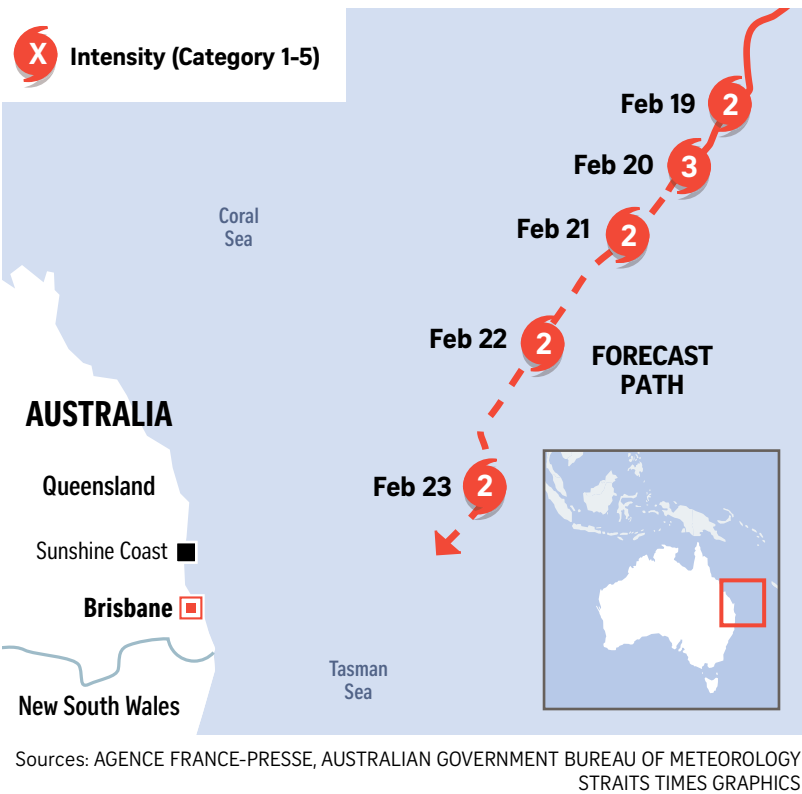
While the ship was carrying baux-

ite, any such large vessel would also have considerable amounts of oil and fuel for its engines.

Island Sun News reported that the Hong Kong-flagged ship's owners, Bintan Mining, had flown in salvage experts from Australia and the United States.

Officials from neighbouring Australia said they were working with the Solomon Islands government to "hold the responsible company, owners and insurers to account in responding to this maritime incident". AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Cyclone Oma





Demonstrators holding banners that read "Participants in a coup to prison" and "Go On Spaniards. Scared of nothing and no one" at a rally on Feb 10 to protest against talks between Socialist Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez and Catalan pro-independence leaders. The opposition MPs believe Catalonia's separatist leaders should stand trial on charges of treason. PHOTO: EPA-EFE

News analysis

Populists are looming in Spain's general election

Political polarisation threatens to paralyse nation seen as key to Europe's stability



Jonathan Eyal

Global Affairs Correspondent

Politicians in Spain have traded barbs and personal insults at the start of what will be an unusually long and hard campaign for the national election, scheduled for

April 28. Anxious leaders throughout Europe fear that not only would the ballot fail to break Spain's current political logjam, it may also provide a boost to far-right populist movements now rising to prominence in many other parts of the continent. Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez called a snap election one year earlier than needed after his Budget was rejected in Parliament. But the real reason for the collapse of the government was Mr Sanchez's decision to open talks with leaders in Catalonia who two years ago attempted to declare

their province's independence from Spain in defiance of constitutional provisions. That angered opposition MPs of every stripe who are adamant that Catalonia's separatist leaders should stand trial on charges of treason for seeking to bring about the disintegration of Spain. Ultimately, the Spanish government, which has no overall majority in Parliament and depends on the votes of Catalan nationalists, determined that a fresh vote was the only way out of the impasse. Mr Sanchez's ruling Socialists should benefit from the fact that the Spanish economy is doing rather well. While several countries in the euro zone single currency are flirting with recession, the Spanish

economy is still growing at a respectable average of 3 per cent a year, double the rate of European laggards such as Italy. Joblessness has almost halved since its peak in early 2013. And Spain's public debt burden is on a gradually declining trajectory. But opinion polls indicate that although the Socialists would increase their presence in Parliament by 34 seats to a total of 119, that's still far from the overall majority of 176 required in the 350-seat Congress of Deputies, the Lower Chamber of Parliament. To make matters worse for the government, the anti-establishment Podemos party, a left-wing movement which under normal circumstances could be expected to support the Socialists, now appears to be in decline. So if

Mr Sanchez is to have any chance of holding on to power, he may have to rely yet again on an informal coalition with Catalan nationalists, precisely what brought his government down in the first place. This is why the main centre-right opposition People's Party (PP) is now concentrating all its political fire on accusing the ruling Socialists of undermining Spain's territorial integrity. Mr Pablo Casado, the 38-year-old PP leader, claims that the April election will be the most significant in the nation's history since the 1970s, when the country emerged from dictatorship. "Forty years later, they are forcing us to choose between confrontation and concord," Mr Casado claimed at the launch of his electoral campaign this week.

The possibility that a future Spanish government may rely on right-wing populists for its survival comes at an awkward time for the European Union, which is facing the delicate task of a redistribution of power due to the departure of Britain, and already has to contend with populist-leaning governments in Poland, Hungary and Italy.

The party also charges the government with trampling over Spain's religious traditions by holding a general election during the Easter holidays. "Rather than see city lampposts draped with politicians' faces, I would prefer to see them covered with the symbols of religious brotherhood," said PP secretary-general Teodoro Garcia in an obvious appeal to pious voters. The PP is not doing well; opinion polls project it will get around 20 per cent of the vote, down from the 33 per cent in the last general election in 2016. But the party holds two key advantages: It can rely on the support of the Ciudadanos (Citizens) party, a centre-right movement, and it could attract the support of Vox, a far-right movement established only five years ago. Strongly nationalist and demanding the closure of the country's borders to immigrants, as well as the abolition of the autonomy of Spain's various regions, Vox has transformed itself from a fringe movement of no importance to a party now predicted to win around 10 per cent of the ballots, potentially giving it the role of a kingmaker in a future PP-led government. And the more the Socialists appear to be relying on support from Catalan separatists, the more Vox – the Latin word for "voice" – can claim to be the true voice of mainstream, patriotic Spain. The possibility that a future Spanish government may rely on right-wing populists for its survival comes at an awkward time for the European Union, which is facing the delicate task of a redistribution of power due to the departure of Britain, and already has to contend with populist-leaning governments in Poland, Hungary and Italy. And there are also fears that the current polarisation of Spain's politics could paralyse a country which remains essential for European stability. Still, all the EU can do at this stage is watch, and hope that the Spanish elections won't produce another difficult member state.

Jonathan.eyal@gmail.com

Food-makers stock up to ensure Britons well supplied post-Brexit

CHICAGO • As Brexit looms, Kellogg and Mondelez International are taking measures to protect Britons from a potential shortage of Pringles chips, BelVita biscuits and Milka chocolate. With Britain at risk of leaving the European Union on March 29 without a divorce deal – known as a "hard" Brexit – several big companies have begun to prepare for the disruption that could ensue. Kellogg is opening new warehouses and stocking up on its snacks and cereals, hoping to mitigate damage from friction at the British border and tariffs on imports, chief executive Steve Cahillane said in a recent interview. Kellogg is also working with suppliers to make sure it has enough raw materials at its plants, Cahillane said ahead of Cagney, a major food and consumer products event being held this week in Boca Raton, Florida. "We're making plans and spending real money to mitigate impact. That's things like opening new warehouses, building inventory, preparing ourselves in the best possible way," Mr Cahillane said. Mr Cahillane said Kellogg's supply chain left it exposed. For instance, Pringles, Britain's No. 2 crisp brand after PepsiCo's Walkers, are made in Belgium.

Pringles, which could last up to 15 months in storage, banked British retail sales of US\$342.6 million (\$\$464 million) last year, according to Euromonitor. In Europe, Kellogg's cereal business – the biggest in Western Europe with a 23.2 per cent share of the market last year – is sourced primarily from Britain, Mr Cahillane said. Europe accounted for nearly 18 per cent of Kellogg's total sales last year. "In an EU environment that's just fine, but in a Customs environment, in a "hard Brexit" environment, it's going to change and we have to prepare ourselves for that." Mondelez, meanwhile, is preparing for a "soft" Brexit, hoping that British and European lawmakers come to an agreement. "Roughly, we're expecting interruptions to product flow for three to four weeks," chief executive Dirk Van de Put told Reuters on Tuesday on the sidelines of the Cagney conference. Mondelez has increased warehousing and transportation capacity in Britain, and been stockpiling all its European-made products, including BelVita biscuits and Milka chocolate, Mr Van de Put said. He added that Mondelez had no plans to raise prices for these products, but that a serious devaluation



In Europe, Kellogg's cereal business – the biggest in Western Europe, with a 23.2 per cent market share last year – is sourced mainly from Britain. Kellogg is opening new warehouses and stocking up on supplies. PHOTO: BLOOMBERG

of the pound could make European goods very expensive. "This could become a potential issue," he said. Reuters reported on Tuesday that Britons could face shortages of fresh food, price rises and less variety if the country leaves the European Union next month without agreeing to trade terms. Earlier this month, Kellogg said US\$3 million in Brexit-planning costs were partly to blame for lower fourth-quarter earnings. This compounded surging input costs that have plagued the packaged food industry over the past year. Anglo-Dutch consumer goods maker Unilever said last month that it was stockpiling ice cream in Britain and deodorants in continental Europe to guard against potential supply disruptions in the event of a no-deal Brexit. REUTERS

MITIGATING IMPACT
We're making plans and spending real money to mitigate impact. That's things like opening new warehouses, building inventory, preparing ourselves in the best possible way.

KELLOGG CHIEF EXECUTIVE STEVE CAHILLANE

UN to help combat sexual abuse in ranks

NEW YORK • The United Nations has taken steps to tackle sexual exploitation and abuse within its ranks, naming an array of experts to a panel aimed at ending incidents of harassment that have plagued the global agency for years. The panel will advise the UN Secretary-General on ways to address gender-based harassment and abuse by UN staff and UN-related forces, according to a statement issued by the Office of Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on Tuesday. The United Nations has been trying to increase transparency and strengthen how it deals with such accusations over the past few years, particularly a string of sexual exploitation and abuse claims made against UN peacekeepers in Africa. Last month, a report released by the UN said one-third of its staff and contractors had experienced sexual harassment in the past two years. The survey was completed by more than 30,000 people from the UN and its agencies and contractors. The effort comes amid the wider #MeToo movement around the world against sexual harassment and assault. In an editorial in Tuesday's New York Daily News on the "maddeningly slow" pace of #MeToo at the UN, former staff member Katrin Park wrote that the global agency has had an "anti-Me-Too culture" and been largely silent about sexual abuse. "The diplomatic corps is an old

boys' club," Ms Park wrote, adding: "Transparency is not the UN's strong suit." The panel will help devise measures for prevention and accountability, part of a broader strategy the Secretary-General laid out in 2017, his office said. Attention to issues of sexual harassment at the UN helps shine a light on similar problems around the world, said Ms Charlotte Bunch, a professor of women and gender studies at Rutgers University in New Jersey and a former consultant at the UN. "Because we expect more of the UN, because we think that it's supposed to be for the moral good and human rights, there's been more exposure of these problems. In that sense, it's very useful to keep pushing the UN," she told the Thomson Reuters Foundation. "Bureaucracies move very slowly," she added. "They do have built-in systems of protecting their own." The panel members are experts in areas of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender/transsexual and related communities, women, children and human rights, human trafficking, international war crimes, and global law and trade. Last year, the UN set up a 24-hour helpline for staff to report sexual harassment in the workplace, as well as procedures to help process complaints. REUTERS

Russia will target US if it puts missiles in Europe: Putin

Warning comes at end of speech devoted mainly to vows to improve Russians' welfare

MOSCOW • Russian President Vladimir Putin signalled Russia will aim new weapons at the US if it stations missiles in Europe after quitting a landmark Cold-War-era treaty, amid growing fears of a new arms race.

Still, the tone of Mr Putin's annual state-of-the-nation speech was less belligerent than a year ago, when he showed computer-graphics demonstrations of a series of new missiles and other high-tech weapons that appeared to target the US.

With its only graphic displays focused on economics, this year's ad-

dress was devoted primarily to pledges to improve living standards and boost welfare benefits.

Russia does not plan to deploy missiles banned by the 1987 Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces treaty that the US has said it plans to abandon, Mr Putin said.

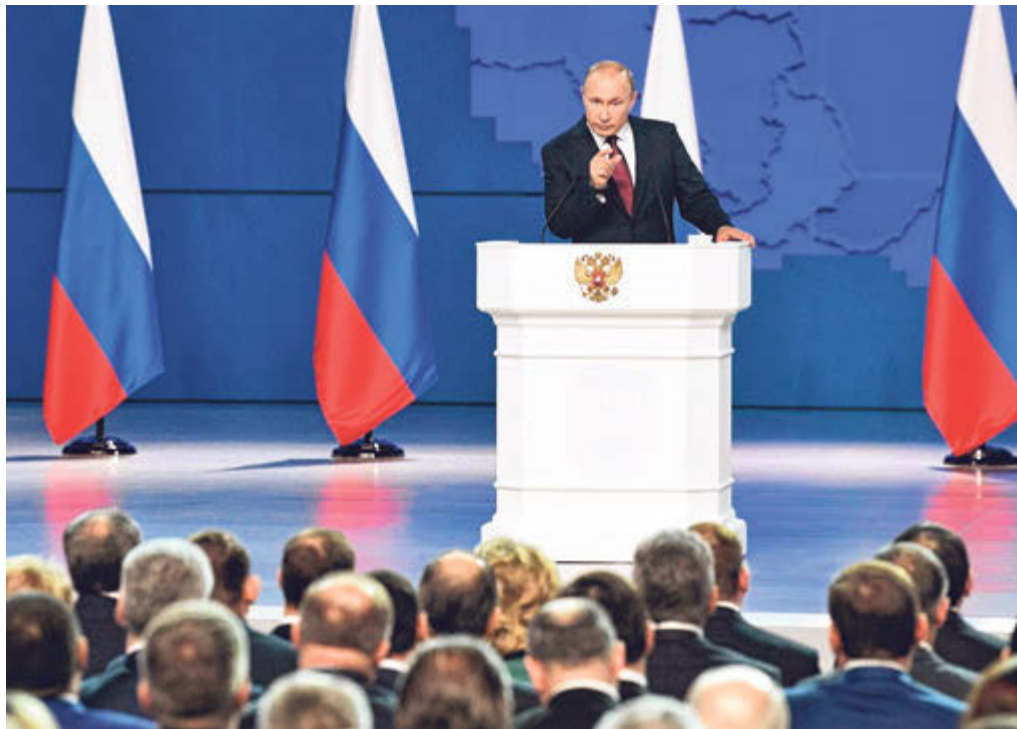
But if the US does, "Russia will be forced to produce and deploy weapons that can be used not only against the territories from which we face this direct threat but also those where the decision is made to use these missiles", he said to applause from the hundreds of offi-

cials in the hall near the Kremlin.

The US and its allies are laying the groundwork to deploy new intermediate-range missiles in Europe for the first time since they were banned by the treaty. With a second pact covering nuclear weapons likely to expire in two years, the risks of confrontation are growing.

Mr Putin blasted the US for ignoring Russia's interests, saying officials in Washington should "count the range and speed of our future weapons systems".

He said many of the weapons he displayed last year will soon be deployed, including a hypersonic glider that could carry nuclear weapons and evade US missile defences, a laser cannon and an underwater drone called Poseidon.



Russian President Vladimir Putin delivering his annual state-of-the-nation address in Moscow yesterday. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

His warnings came at the end of a speech that focused mainly on a pledge to deliver improvements in living standards in 2019, after years of stagnant or falling real incomes that have sharply dented his popularity.

"Already this year, people should feel changes for the better," Mr Putin said. "We can't repeat the mistakes of the past decades and wait for the achievement of commu-

nism," he said, referring to Soviet promises of an ideal society that never materialised in 70 years of one-party rule.

The Russian leader, who won a new six-year term last year, has been feeling the heat domestically, with popular dissatisfaction with the erosion in living standards heightened by decisions to raise the retirement age and increase the value-added tax.

Patriotic fervour that bolstered Mr Putin after the annexation of Ukraine's Crimea peninsula in 2014 has dissipated.

His electoral rating is now at the lowest level in six years, according to the Public Opinion Foundation pollster, while public trust in him as a leader is at the worst in more than a decade, according to the state-run VTsIOM research organisation. BLOOMBERG

US airlines to give travellers more gender options during booking

NEW YORK • US carriers will soon offer passengers additional options besides "male" and "female" when they buy tickets, an airline trade association has said.

The shift comes as a handful of US states permit citizens to identify themselves by non-binary genders and as a minority of countries within the European Union permit citizens to self-identify by their gender preference.

From June 1, members of Airlines for America, a trade group that rep-

resents most leading US carriers, will allow consumers to pick "unspecified" and "undisclosed" in addition to the traditional two options.

"US airlines value a culture of diversity and inclusion, both in the workplace and for our passengers and we work hard each day to accommodate the needs of all travellers, while delivering a safe, secure and enjoyable flight experience," the group said on Tuesday.

Implementation of the shift will

be up to members of the group, which is also known as A4A. Members of the association include American Airlines and Southwest Airlines.

United Airlines, another member, said on Twitter: "In the coming weeks, customers will be able to select the gender with which they most closely identify during the booking process."

Delta Air Lines, which is not in A4A, also plans non-binary gender options during the booking

process, a spokesman said.

Seven states in the US and the District of Columbia allow citizens to define as "X" gender, in addition to male and female, said Ms Gillian Branstetter, media relations manager at the National Centre of Transgender Equality.

The group applauded the airline announcement.

"Non-binary people face unnecessary, invasive and discriminatory scrutiny by airlines, airports and security services alike," said Ms Arli

Christian, state policy director for the National Centre for Transgender Equality.

"A4A's work is in line with other states which offer gender-neutral designations on IDs and is an important step toward ensuring safe and smooth travel for all passengers regardless of their gender."

Among the 28 EU member states and three European Free Trade Association states, seven countries currently have or will soon have a model that lets adults self-define

their gender, according to a November 2018 European Commission report on trans and intersex equality.

However, only one jurisdiction – Malta – permits non-binary recognition. EU countries, as well as the EU itself, "are firmly grounded in a binary conception of sex", said the report.

"While public awareness is improving, trans and intersex people continue to suffer disproportionate social and legal burdens," the report said. AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE



Controversial Thai Buddhist sect's annual procession draws thousands

BANGKOK • Thousands of devotees of a powerful Thai Buddhist sect, whose spiritual leader is on the run over a multimillion-dollar fraud, joined a stunning candle-lit procession at its 400ha Bangkok headquarters.

The Dhammakaya sect, a wealthy Buddhist order founded in 1970, was steered to riches by the septuagenarian monk Phra Dhammachayo.

He won the devotion of super-rich Thai politicians and business-

men and, with it, the distrust of Thailand's Buddhist establishment.

The former abbot was the subject of a massive police hunt of the Dhammakaya temple complex in 2017, where he was believed to have been holed up to evade arrest over allegations of money laundering and a massive embezzlement of US\$33 million (S\$45 million).

The monk, 72 at the time, vanished without trace after a search which lurched into farce and saw officers being led through hundreds

of rooms – including a chamber where they pulled back a bed cover to find an arrangement of pillows instead of the elderly monk.

Police eventually concluded that the abbot may have slipped out of the temple in the early days of their weeks-long search.

The temple has since quietly rebounded and continues to hold several high-profile annual events.

On Tuesday evening, the 300,000 tiny Buddha statues which stud the space-age dome of

the vast temple, were illuminated as worshippers paraded around the dome. Thousands of monks and white-clad temple members held candles in a stunning, perfectly choreographed expression of devotion, with giant flags bearing the Dhammakaya's symbol billowing overhead.

The annual event was held to mark Makha Bucha Day, one of the most important days of the Buddhist calendar.

The Dhammakaya was accused by the Buddhist authorities of spinning a pay-your-way to nirvana philosophy, spreading the sect's popularity through public relations events.

The temple refuted the allegations, saying it has been the target of politically motivated charges. AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Devotees praying to mark Makha Bucha Day at the Wat Phra Dhammakaya temple near Bangkok on Tuesday. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

WorldBriefs

S. Korea withdraws K-pop guidelines

SEOUL • Government guidelines aimed at promoting diversity in the K-pop world have been withdrawn amid criticism of state censorship.

The guidelines issued by South Korea's ministry of gender equality last week complained that stars looked too alike, noting that most idols were thin and wore similar make-up and skimpy outfits. It said on Tuesday it would retract the recommendation as it had "caused unnecessary confusion". AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Ex-military chief jailed for life in China

BEIJING • A former chief of staff of China's military has been sentenced to life in prison after being swept up in President Xi Jinping's anti-graft crackdown.

Appointed to the People's Liberation Army's top post in 2012, Fang Fenghui was convicted in a military court of accepting and offering bribes, and having an unclear source of a huge amount of assets, official news agency Xinhua said. The court also stripped Fang of political rights for life and ordered the confiscation of all his personal assets. AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Boy's suicide: Bullies to pay damages

OTSU (Japan) • Two former classmates of a 13-year-old boy who committed suicide have been ordered to pay damages of 37 million yen (S\$453,300) after a court ruling that their bullying led to his death, Japan Today reported.

"The main cause of the boy's suicide were the acts against him by the former classmates," Judge Shigeyasu Nishioka said at a district court in Shiga prefecture on Tuesday.

THE STRAITS TIMES

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China looks south again for growth

China is seeking a second wind with a strategic plan to transform its most globalised terrain – the southern coast – into the world’s top technology-driven megalopolis. On Monday, it revealed the outlines of the Greater Bay Area, which will knit together the semi-autonomous regions of Hong Kong and Macau with Shenzhen, Guangzhou and seven other adjoining cities in the Pearl River Delta. Along with ambitious plans to rekindle growth, Beijing’s move underlines its resolve to cut its dependence on foreign technology. That it comes amid a trade war with the United States, which forced Beijing to mothball the “Made in China 2025” programme, is also noteworthy. Another goal being served is that the Greater Bay Area will propel

China’s other grand plan, the Belt and Road Initiative, in the face of some doubts gnawing at President Xi Jinping’s signature project.

In two decades, China’s latest blockbuster project may well dwarf the Silicon Valley, the New York metropolitan area and Greater Tokyo. The Greater Bay Area already has a population of 70 million people and an economy worth US\$1.5 trillion (S\$2 trillion), bigger than that of South-east Asia’s largest economy, Indonesia. Growing in double digits for the past decade, it gleams with new infrastructure, including high-speed rail links and the world’s longest sea bridge. Once renowned as the world’s cut-rate factory, the region has gained notice for advances in automation, robotics, deep

learning and genomics. In Shenzhen lie the headquarters of China’s technology titans like gaming and social media giant Tencent, and the world’s largest telecommunications equipment supplier and device-maker Huawei. In Hong Kong, the new zone has a major capital market and a port.

But original inventions are not yet its forte. And the fact that China’s top science and engineering schools are located in the northern and eastern provinces, not the south, is a disadvantage. For basics, such as chips, the dependence on foreign suppliers will persist. The biggest test, however, will be securing the free movement of people, capital and information across the different legal and administrative systems which the zone combines. This in-

cludes the knotty political challenge of bridging the mainland’s gap with Hong Kong. It remains to be seen if the region, where Mr Deng Xiaoping’s 1978 reforms took root and flourished, can thrive as well in the more tightly controlled Xi era.

For South-east Asian nations, the Greater Bay Area will invariably mean competition for foreign investment. But it can also present opportunities. Guangdong has been Singapore’s top provincial trading partner for the last three decades. There is no reason this should cease. The improved connectivity and the unlocking of new trade and investment flows will open up more venues for Singapore firms in areas such as urban solutions, logistics and consumer services.

HomeFront

Concerted caring for caregivers

A new Caregiver Support Action Plan aims to relieve the burden of those who care for their loved ones. But does it go far enough?



Theresa Tan

Senior Social Affairs Correspondent

Madam Fong Mei Noong, 74, is the sole caregiver to her hundred-year-old mother and an intellectually disabled sister, 67.

Her mother is bed-bound, tube-fed, suffers from dementia and requires 24/7 care.

Madam Fong, a widow with one son, survives on the roughly \$600 she earns as a part-time waitress.

Half of her take-home pay goes towards the expenses incurred by her mother and sister, such as their fees at a daycare centre for frail seniors. The fees she pays are heavily subsidised, given her meagre income.

So the new Home Caregiving Grant, which gives families like hers \$200 a month, eases her finances.

“I earn so little, so there is not enough money,” she said. “The social workers advised me to send my mother and sister to a daycare centre so I don’t have to worry about them while I’m working. If I don’t work and there is no income, how do we survive?”

There are tens, if not hundreds, of thousands of Singaporeans like Madam Fong who are taxed financially, physically and emotionally by caring for a loved one who may be old, frail or disabled.

STRESS OF CAREGIVING

Caregiver stress has received greater attention in the past decade, as the population is rapidly ageing, family sizes shrink and the burden of care for a senior falls on fewer shoulders.

The statistics are grim.

By 2030, one in four Singaporeans or permanent residents will be aged 65 or older. The old-age support ratio is expected to fall from 4.8 last year to 2.1 in 2030. This refers to the number of people capable of giving financial support to the number of older people who need it.

And caregiving takes a toll on one’s mental and emotional health.

For example, a 2013 study of caregiver stress by the Duke-NUS Medical School found that almost half of approximately 1,200 caregivers work, but they spend 38 hours every week on caregiving. They are also more likely to suffer from depression and stress.

The need to take care of the people taking care of the elderly,

sick or disabled is almost a no-brainer. If the caregiver is down, it is one extra person needing care, and the person being cared for is also left bereft of help.

Last Wednesday, Senior Minister of State for Health Edwin Tong announced a raft of measures to support caregivers, stating that the Caregiver Support Action Plan reflects the Government’s commitment to strengthen support for senior caregiving.

These measures, which run the gamut from financial and employment to socioemotional support, will also help those caring for a child or younger person with disabilities.

MONEY IS THE MAIN WORRY

Social workers note that finances are the chief concern of caregivers.

To alleviate their burden, the Government will introduce a Home Caregiving Grant of \$200 a month by the end of the year.

This replaces the Foreign Domestic Worker Grant of \$120 a month, which can be used only to offset the cost of hiring a maid.

The new grant can be used for more purposes, such as paying for transport to medical appointments or for homecare services.

To qualify, the person receiving care must need help with at least three activities of daily living, such as eating, going to the toilet or walking. The per capita household income must be \$2,600 or less a month.

While those interviewed welcome the new grant, some say the criteria could be relaxed to help more of those in need.

For example, some of those requiring care are physically independent, yet it is no walk in the park to care for them.

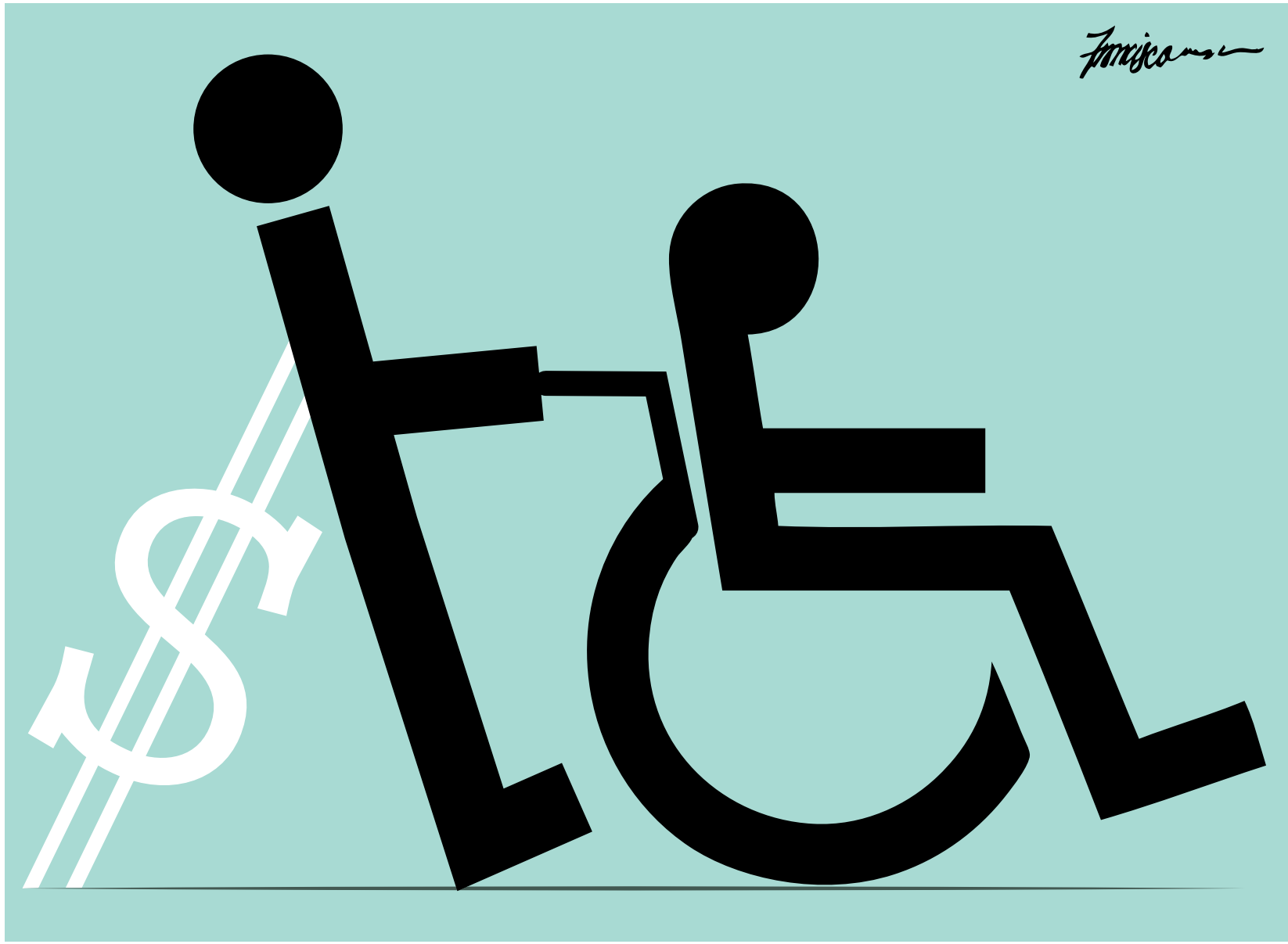
Ms Sandra Tan, assistant director of Awwa Family Service Centre, cited the example of a senior with dementia who is mobile but who presents a host of challenging behaviour that causes the caregiver much stress.

Besides the new grant, caregivers can also use their Medisave to pay for their Singaporean or permanent resident siblings’ medical bills. Now, Medisave can be used to pay for only spouses’, children’s, parents’ and grandparents’ bills.

This move is necessary, as more Singaporeans remain single and do not have spouses or children to fall back on. But they may have siblings who are keen to help.

In Monday’s Budget, Finance Minister Heng Swee Keat said the Government will top up the Central Provident Fund (CPF) account by up to \$1,000 for eligible Singaporeans aged 50 to 64 this year and who have less than \$60,000 of retirement savings in their CPF accounts.

Most in this group are women, Mr



Heng said. And many left the workforce early to be mothers or play other caregiving roles.

He said: “This top-up is a way to recognise their contributions and to help them save more.”

FLEXIBLE WORK ARRANGEMENTS NEEDED

The availability of flexible work arrangements that allow Singaporeans to juggle work and caregiving demands is another concern. Social workers say some caregivers have had to quit their jobs as they cannot juggle the two competing demands.

Mr Kelvin Lee, manager of Touch Caregivers Support, said: “In many instances, individuals become caregivers overnight and have to quit their jobs to provide care. Many are unprepared, overwhelmed and end up feeling frustrated or bitter.”

To address this issue, the Manpower Ministry is exploring increasing the budget for its Work Life Grant to encourage more firms to offer flexible work arrangements.

Mr Tong said in Parliament last week: “Often, they do not need a full or even half-day’s leave, and two to three hours would be sufficient. Other caregivers may require flexibility to work offsite on occasion, whilst they take care of their dependant.”

RESPITE OPTIONS

Another key thrust of the new

\$200

The monthly Home Caregiving Grant the Government will introduce by the end of the year. It replaces the Foreign Domestic Worker Grant of \$120 a month, which can be used only to offset the cost of hiring a maid. The new grant can be used for more purposes, such as paying for transport to medical appointments or for homecare services.

measures is to provide more emotional support to caregivers and put in place more respite options.

Ms Peh Kim Choo, chief executive of the Tsao Foundation, said: “Caregiving is a very tiring, 24/7 task. We have come across caregivers who were so devoted to their caregiving tasks that they completely forgot to care for themselves.”

For example, the Agency for Integrated Care will pilot a new night respite service for seniors with dementia and sleep problems, so that their caregivers can rest.

There are also plans for more support networks for caregivers.

While fee details of the new respite services are unavailable, experts interviewed said that cost is one main reason respite care is not popular yet.

For example, it costs about \$3,000 a month to place a senior who needs help with the activities of daily living in a private nursing home to give the senior’s loved ones a break, said Dr Jamie Phang, Methodist Welfare Services cluster director of community eldercare.

The Tsao Foundation’s Ms Peh said it costs about \$22 an hour to hire a professional caregiver and there is often a minimum number of hours you have to engage the services for.

A report on the state of eldercare here by the Lien Foundation found that overnight respite care services for the elderly who need nursing care are mostly provided by private nursing homes.

Touch’s Mr Lee said: “Having respite care is seen as a luxury. Caregivers usually seek respite not as a regular break, but as a last resort, before they break down.”

While it is laudable to introduce more respite care options, it is imperative that these services are affordable and easy to access.

CAN CAREGIVERS ACCEPT CARE?

Still, the Government can do only so much. The community also has a role to play.

For example, Touch Caregivers

Support is actively connecting neighbours in an Ang Mo Kio neighbourhood they work in. The residents are given the skills and confidence to reach out to and support a neighbour who may be suffering from caregiver stress or depression.

Such ground initiatives are important as some caregivers are cooped up at home with their charges and are reluctant to seek help. But knowing that a concerned friend or neighbour is watching out for them could make all the difference in nudging them to seek help.

But the best-laid plans come to nought if caregivers are unwilling to seek or accept help. For many, they put the needs of their loved ones above themselves.

Take, for example, Madam Toh Kwan Heng, 71, who looks after her sister, 68, who suffers from schizophrenia.

Madam Toh, a divorcee, is part of the Queenstown Caregiver Connect – a support group for caregivers. She learnt of the group from a friend.

“At least I know I’m not alone,” said Madam Toh, who works as an administrative staff. “There are others in the group to talk to, and as I learnt more about my sister’s illness, it’s also easier to care for her.”

theresat@sph.com.sg

Budget 2019: Expert views

The Budget speech is really an investment speech

Lawrence Loh

For The Straits Times

We go through this ritual every year. Singapore's annual incomes and expenditures are presented by the Finance Minister in a so-called Budget speech.

This is followed by an almost two-week period where Parliament sits as the Committee of Supply, involving a series of discussions popularly called the "Budget debate".

To speak on issues relating to any ministry, Members of Parliament will have to propose nominal cuts to a ministry's budget. Last year, the members filed a total of 530 cuts and the debate lasted some 3,120 minutes or 52 hours in total, which is the longest period in five years.

For this year, Finance Minister Heng Swee Keat has just presented the Budget speech. If anything, we see less and less of an annual Budget proposal and more and more, as the minister puts it, a strategic plan.

I would say that it is even less a specific "Budget speech" than a

broader "Investment speech".

In a business sense, this year's Budget speech has articulated our national investments dominantly along three key thrusts.

STRUCTURAL FRAMEWORK

First, the Budget is about investment in Singapore's structural framework for enterprise development. The fiscal year will see some \$704 million in a total value of special transfers to business.

Very notably, there is a \$100 million small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) Co-Investment Fund to help SMEs scale up and be ready for future competition. Existing initiatives such as the SME Working Capital Loan scheme and Automation Support Package will be extended, in fact even beyond this fiscal year to March 2021.

Interestingly, two unconventional industries for Singapore, namely aquaculture and energy, will be nurtured through new innovation centres.

These represent novel areas of involvement that are probably contrarian considering the country's resource and size constraints. These are investments not only to deliver economic

returns in themselves but also for Singapore's food and energy security in the long haul.

Most significantly, we will see Singapore being developed as strategic rallying points like the "Asia 101" for multinational corporations seeking Asian markets and the "Global 101" for Asian companies going to the world.

SKILLS FOUNDATION

Second, the Budget continues the country's investment in the development of worker skills. While enhancing general worker capabilities had been initiated some years back, the global twist is now beginning to take clear shape.

The noteworthy Global Ready Talent Programme will harmonise various existing related initiatives into a coherent human resource development platform.

Skills needed for emerging technology areas are not ignored. New Professional Conversion Programmes relating to blockchains, embedded software and prefabrication will be launched.

Skills of indigenous workers and older workers will also receive support through tightening of the

The public finance paradigm of Singapore is not about spending today but investing for tomorrow. It is part of Singapore's unique way of national governance. Budget 2019 is not just about budgeting for the year. It is really about our investments for the future.

foreign workforce quotas for the service sector and extending the Career Support Programme for hiring eligible mature, retrenched Singaporeans.

SOCIAL FABRIC

Third, the Budget emphasises investment on the national social fabric. Strengthening societal cohesiveness is key to Singapore's future.

Budget 2019 introduces a \$6.1 billion Merdeka Generation Package that is targeted to take care of the healthcare needs of citizens born in the 1950s.

A new Long-Term Care Support Fund totalling \$5.1 billion will be launched for CareShield Life subsidies as protection against disability as well as for other support measures. All these involve the \$2 billion earmarked last year with the rest coming from this year's allocation.

Special to this year is the \$1.1 billion Bicentennial Bonus, which consists of income tax rebates, education account top-ups and top-ups to Central Provident Fund (CPF) accounts. Apart from the income tax rebate, most of the other benefits will especially

benefit the lower-income segments.

GOVERNANCE APPROACH

Singapore's national strategic planning approach seems to rely primarily on the annual plan as encapsulated by the yearly Budget. Of course, there is also the Prime Minister's National Day Rally Speech which lays out the critical parameters and considerations for the country. But again, this is yearly in nature.

We do see countries that have five-year plans. For example, China is in its 13th five-year plan for 2016-2020. Likewise, neighbouring Malaysia has explicit five-year planning horizons, and the country is in the 11th plan since the formation of its federation.

Does Singapore need five-year plans? Probably not.

The current annual Budget method is already a dynamic strategic plan with a long-term investment orientation. In fact, in the era of rapid global changes, the lines between single and multiple years are getting blurred, and the short and long terms are tightly intertwined.

The public finance paradigm of Singapore is not about spending today but investing for tomorrow. It is part of Singapore's unique way of national governance.

Budget 2019 is not just about budgeting for the year. It is really about our investments for the future.

stopinion@sph.com.sg

• Lawrence Loh is director of Centre for Governance, Institutions and Organisations at National University of Singapore (NUS) Business School. He is also associate professor of strategy and policy at the school.

Pioneer, Merdeka Generation Packages: Gig-economy generation may need more help

Younger Singaporeans facing disrupted careers and the uncertainties of a gig economy may accumulate lower CPF balances and need even more help with healthcare financing than past generations

Jeremy Lim

For The Straits Times

An eye-watering \$6.1 billion. That is the value of the Merdeka Generation Package (MGP), the details of which were announced by Finance Minister Heng Swee Keat earlier this week in the Budget speech.

While Singaporeans are grateful for the MGP's generosity, questions are nonetheless being raised about whether a broader universal health scheme should be introduced to benefit all Singaporeans of all ages instead of ad hoc initiatives such as the MGP and Pioneer Generation Package (PGP). In keeping with the national stance of prudence and fiscal conservatism, there are also concerns about the sustainability of healthcare spending.

A PACKAGE FOR EVERY GENERATION?

The MGP recognises the contributions of this generation – the "earliest batches to serve national service, build up our public services, and modernise our economy". It benefits approximately 500,000 Singaporeans and comes just five years after the PGP. The PGP, a \$9 billion scheme benefiting 450,000 pioneer Singaporeans, was to "honour and thank our pioneers for their hard work and dedication".

Taken together, almost a million Singaporeans, or just under 30 per cent of Singapore citizens, have healthcare benefits beyond those of the traditional subsidies and 3M (Medisave, MediShield Life, Medifund) framework. The narrative of these packages as a "reward" for nation-building should be noted with the Government



A recent study the writer was involved in showed that for a freelancer embracing the gig economy right from Day 1, CPF monies and, hence, Medisave monies in the current construct are going to be insufficient for many Singaporeans facing the risk of disrupted careers. ST PHOTO: KELVIN CHNG

careful to not commit to continued largesse for future generations.

However, today's economic realities may render our young even more vulnerable to health-financing inadequacies in their golden years.

The inexorable rise of the "gig economy" (projected to grow at 30 per cent per annum in America and Europe) and growing job insecurity mean that fewer Singaporeans will enjoy a lifetime of formal employment with regular contributions to one's Central Provident Fund (CPF) accounts and, hence, Medisave account. Medisave monies are the base to fund MediShield Life and CareShield Life premiums.

Hence, formal employment, or the lack thereof, creates a ripple through to future healthcare funding needs.

A recent study I was involved in modelled three worker archetypes: The first with traditional employment until age 65, the second with traditional employment but transitioning at

age 45 into the gig economy and the last, a freelancer embracing the gig economy right from Day 1. We found that total CPF savings at age 65 ranged from \$175,000 to \$644,000, with the highest sum going to the one who remained in traditional employment till 65. We can argue over the specific numbers, but the overall messages are indisputable – CPF monies and, hence, Medisave monies in the current construct are going to be insufficient for many Singaporeans facing the risk of disrupted careers.

Will the generations beyond Pioneer and Merdeka then need their own packages? Not as recognition or reward but simply out of need?

HEALTHCARE FISCAL SUSTAINABILITY – LOOKING BEYOND THE PACKAGING

There is an alternative way to help future generations with healthcare financing and that is to design a system that offers better coverage for all.

From a purely healthcare operational perspective, a unified package applicable to all Singaporeans makes good sense. The resultant simplification reduces the cognitive burden on patients and staff navigating the panoply of schemes and minimises cases of erroneous subsidy computation as revealed by the Ministry of Health recently.

Applying an equity lens also argues for a single national package – 70 per cent of Singaporeans should not be treated differently simply as a matter of birth year. For example, someone born in 1960 now will pay 25 per cent more for subsidised outpatient bills, compared with someone born in 1959, who enjoys the MGP.

Compared with a nationwide package for all, it is true that targeted schemes like the PGP and MGP are more congruent with the Government's longstanding philosophy of eschewing intergenerational transfers and reluctance to commit future governments to open-ended,

two packages remains to be confirmed.

Instead of relying on targeting recipients to rein in costs, there are other mechanisms that can be used. Three additional elements of the Singapore healthcare system come into play to help maintain fiscal sustainability.

First, the Singapore Government is not only the largest purchaser of healthcare services nationally, but it is also the largest healthcare provider through the clusters. Hence, it is not a passive payer held hostage by avaricious providers but can actively determine costs on the supply side of the healthcare equation.

Second, the Government has regulatory powers and can powerfully introduce innovations through technologies such as artificial intelligence, telemedicine and the like to change care models to ones with lower unit production costs.

Finally, through bodies such as the Agency for Care Effectiveness, which determines the cost-effectiveness of healthcare goods and services, the Government can stipulate what Medisave, MediShield Life and subsidies will and will not pay for, and, in effect, can ratchet up or down healthcare spending depending on the overall financing position.

In my 2013 book *Myth Or Magic – The Singapore Healthcare System*, I described Singapore's model as the "least imperfect" in the world. The foundational construct remains sound, even as the PGP and MGP add an overlay, targeting specific vulnerabilities without compromising overall financial sustainability. Importantly, Singapore's model enables flexibility and rapid policy changes to address changing needs. Our financial strength as a country also enables the option to extend packages to future generations as needed. Singapore's healthcare system, including its financing, is and will always remain a work in progress, but in my view at least, it is still the "least imperfect".

Going one step further to have an equitable package for all that, say, matches what the MGP receives, will make the system even less imperfect.

stopinion@sph.com.sg

• Dr Jeremy Lim is partner of health and life sciences practice for Asia-Pacific at management consulting firm Oliver Wyman.

Is the US becoming a four-party state?

Thomas L. Friedman

In case you haven't noticed, long-established political parties across the democratic world are blowing up, with Britain's Labour Party just the latest to fracture. Could America's parties be next?

Could we have our first four-party election in 2020 – with candidates from the Donald Trump far-right, the old Republican centre-right, the Joe Biden centre-left and the Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez far-left all squaring off, as the deepening divides within our two big parties simply cannot be papered over any longer?

It's not impossible. Indeed, two phrases recently in the news that touch on core principles of the Democratic and Republican parties are like fuses that could ignite much larger explosions in the coming year.

Those phrases are: "unwilling to work" and "national emergency".

On Feb 7, Ms Ocasio-Cortez's congressional office sent out an explainer of the Green New Deal that she is proposing. The initiative aims "to mobilise every aspect of American society... to achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions and create economic prosperity for all".

I admire that goal and the huge energy she's brought to it among young people. But one version of her office's FAQ stated that the Green New Deal would guarantee, among other benefits, "economic security to all who are unable or unwilling to work".

Economic security for people "unwilling to work"? Who's going to sign up for new taxes to support people unwilling to work or be retrained? When some commentators called this out, Ms Ocasio-Cortez's team said the FAQ was an unfinished draft that never should have been released.

GROW, REDIVIDE OR HOARD THE PIE?

I don't buy it. It was also too late. That phrase – economic security even for people "unwilling to work" – was not just noted by conservatives. It rattled some centre-left Democrats as well, because it hinted that the party's

base had moved much farther to the left in recent years than they'd realised, and it highlighted the most important fault line in today's Democratic Party – the line between what I'd call "redivide-the-pie Democrats" and "grow-the-pie Democrats".

Grow-the-pie Democrats – think Mr Michael Bloomberg – celebrate business, capitalism and start-ups that generate the tax base to create the resources for more infrastructure, schools, green spaces and safety nets, so more people have more opportunity and tools to capture a bigger slice of the pie.

Grow-the-pie Democrats know that good jobs don't come from government or grow on trees – they come from risk-takers who start companies. They come from free markets regulated by and cushioned by smart government.

The wisest grow-the-pie Democrats have also learnt something from the past few years: The benefits of Nafta, open trade with China and the rise of the digital economy – while vital for creating economic growth – don't automatically trickle down, any more than Republican tax cuts did.

They require trade insurance and surge protectors, free community college, portable healthcare coverage and pensions, and a very intentional strategy to more equitably spread the benefits of growth among bosses, workers and shareholders.

Redivide-the-pie Democrats – think Mr Bernie Sanders – argue that after four decades of stagnant middle-class wages – and bailouts for bankers and billionaires but not workers in 2008 – you can't grow the pie without redividing it first.

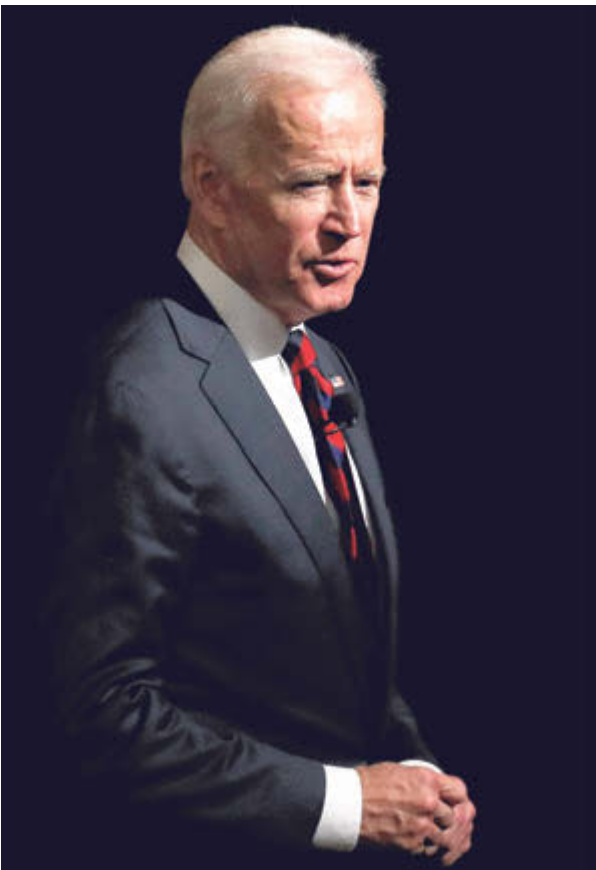
Inequality is too great now. There are too many people too far behind.

The decision by Amazon to scuttle its big expansion in New York City marks the first big clash this election season between grow-the-pie Democrats, who insisted that tax breaks for Amazon would pay for themselves, and redivide-the-pie Democrats, who saw Amazon as pitting their community in a race to the bottom with other communities over which could lavish more subsidies on a tech behemoth that didn't need them.

In truth, the episode was a huge



The writer ponders the possibility of a far-left led by US Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (left), a centre-left led by former US vice-president Joe Biden (right), a Donald Trump far-right and the old GOP centre-right all squaring off in the 2020 election amid deepening divides within the country's two big parties. PHOTOS: REUTERS, AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE



US President Donald Trump (left) has violated the Republican Party's core principle of limited government, but even the limited-government types led by Republican Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (right) might abandon this last core principle and fall in with Mr Trump's usurpation of Congress' power of appropriation, the writer predicts. PHOTOS: EPA-EFE



failure of imagination by both sides. Virginia got it right, explained Ms Amy Liu, urban affairs expert at the Brookings Institution. Yes, it gave Amazon some US\$500 million (S\$676 million) in subsidies, but the state offered twice that amount in new investments in local transportation and schools to create a strong pipeline of technically skilled workers – something that will benefit the entire community for years.

As for the Republican Party, it's divided between a "limited-government-grow-the-pie" right – but one that wants to just let capitalism rip – and a "hoard-the-pie, pull-up-the-drawbridge" Trump-led far right.

The limited-government-grow-the-pie faction is itself split between the Never Trumpers –

who've refused to prostitute themselves to Mr Trump's serial lying, cosying up to Russia and other madness – and those who've hitched a ride on Mr Trump's wagon to get their tax cuts, conservative judges and deregulation.

But Mr Trump's decision to declare a "national emergency" on the Mexico border has violated the party's most core principle of limited government. In doing so it's opened a fissure between the old limited-government-grow-the-pie Republicans and the anti-immigrant hoard-the-pie, pull-up-the-drawbridge Trumpers.

The early signs are that the limited-government types – led by Mr Mitch McConnell – are so morally bankrupt, after having sold their souls to Mr Trump for two

years, they'll even abandon this last core principle and go along with Mr Trump's usurpation of Congress' power of appropriation. Stay tuned.

BYE TO BINARY CHOICES

Over the years, America's two parties have usually managed to handle deep fractures. This time may be different.

The level of outrage in both bases is sky high: Their ability to express that outrage through weaponised social networks, talk radio and cable television is powerful and pervasive, and the three accelerations we're going through – in globalisation, technology and climate change – are stressing everyone and demanding very different political choices.

So here's my hunch: The 2020 US election will be unlike

any in my lifetime.

Think about it. Ever since World War II until the early 21st century, the major political parties in the West were all built on a set of stable binary choices: capital versus labour; big government/high regulation versus small government/low regulation; open to trade and immigration versus more closed to trade and immigration; embracing of new social norms, like gay rights or abortion, and opposed to them; and green versus growth.

Across the industrial world, parties mostly formed along one set of those binary choices or the other. But that is no longer possible.

What if I am a steelworker in Pittsburgh and in the union, but on weekends I drive for Uber and rent out my kid's spare bedroom on Airbnb – and shop at Walmart for the cheapest Chinese imports, and what I can't find there I buy on Amazon through a chatbot that replaced a human?

Monday to Friday I'm with labour. Saturday and Sunday I'm with capital.

My point? Many of the old binary choices simply do not line up with the challenges to workers, communities and companies in this age of accelerating globalisation, technology and climate change, but national governments are so paralysed by partisanship that they can't adapt. And most families are too weak to manage these forces and pass along the American dream to their kids.

COMPLEX ADAPTIVE COALITIONS

Fortunately, all is not lost. Creative adaptation is happening in many of America's counties, cities and towns, where trust is much higher.

The most successful are forging what I call "complex adaptive coalitions", where business, labour, philanthropists, social entrepreneurs, educators and local government all network together to create jobs, attract businesses, grow housing, fix potholes and improve schools.

These coalitions are not focused on splitting the differences between the old right-left binary choices. They've actually moved to a totally different grid – one that asks every day on every issue: "What works? Find it and share it, so we can get the best out of these accelerations in technology, globalisation and climate change and cushion the worst for the most people in our community."

Oxford economist Eric Beinhocker recently pointed out to me research that says there are only two ways to cure political tribalism: "A common threat or a common project."

We need a common project, and it's obvious: Build a new foundation for the middle class. Ultimately that requires the local and the national levels to work together. But for now we should be glad that it's at least happening at the local level.

Mr Don Baer, who served as then President Bill Clinton's communications director, has a bumper sticker for anyone who wants to run for president in 2020 on the grid of rebuilding our country through complex adaptive coalitions – but it will take your whole bumper: "Make America work again, for those who are willing to work and for those who are willing to work together." NYTIMES

Trump, Xi and the danger of self-delusion

Michael Schuman

Optimism that the United States and China can reach a trade deal is rising, with another round of intensive negotiations in Washington this week. What buoyant investors are ignoring, however, is that the talks have become a test of strength between the world's two great powers – or, more accurately, a test of how accurate each nation's sense of its own strength is.

The inconvenient fact is that neither country possesses the power to impose its will on the other.

The US is not on its own capable of compelling Chinese leaders to do its bidding, nor is China strong enough to shun the Western world.

Until they face up to that reality, they'll never be able to reach a lasting accommodation.

From what we know of the ongoing talks, the two sides have

made progress on narrowing the US trade deficit through large Chinese purchases of American soya beans, microchips and other products.

The two also appear to be making some headway on widening access to China's market for foreign firms.

But, there is still no sign of a breakthrough on "structural" issues – US demands for major reforms in Chinese policies that Washington says are biased against US businesses, such as massive subsidies for favoured Chinese companies and forced extraction of technology from foreign firms.

This would be the real meat of any deal, the reforms that would fundamentally alter China's economy and promote more market-based competition.

It's hardly surprising that China would be reluctant to give ground, and not only because meeting US demands would require Beijing to overhaul the way the Chinese economy works.

It's also profoundly difficult to prod countries into doing what they don't want to do through economic pressure. Remember, North Korea has clung to its nuclear weapons even as international sanctions have strangled its economy. In 1973, when the Arab states imposed an oil embargo on the US in retaliation for its support of Israel, Americans chose to wait in long lines for petrol rather than ditch their Middle Eastern ally.

Recent statistics suggest that trying to bludgeon China into submission with tariffs is also a

Mr Xi Jinping and Mr Donald Trump operate in self-created echo chambers. Mr Trump has purged just about everybody from this White House who had a dissenting opinion on his trade strategy, while experience in foreign affairs is generally derided as old, failed thinking. Mr Xi has fostered an environment of such fear that only the bravest of souls would dare speak their minds openly and honestly.

losing strategy. January trade data, for instance, showed that China's overall exports rose by more than 9 per cent even as exports to the US dropped by 2.4 per cent. In other words, as important as the US market is to China, the rest of the world matters, too.

Even technology giant Huawei, facing a concerted US campaign to block use of its equipment in 5G networks, may still thrive by focusing on non-Western markets. Huawei's global market share in smartphones almost matched Apple's last year, according to

research firm Strategy Analytics.

Meanwhile, China has been inflicting some trade pain on the US. Just ask American soya bean farmers, whose shipments to China have plunged as its importers turn to Brazil and other countries amid the tariff war.

While the Chinese economy is indeed slowing, that has less to do with tariffs than serious problems within the domestic economy, such as high levels of debt, and the government's attempt to mitigate them, most of all by controlling the expansion of credit.

At the same time, Beijing has fallen prey to its own form of self-deception. Chinese leaders show little sign of understanding the ire their predatory business practices have fuelled across the world. And it's not just the flood of cheap Chinese imports many countries face, or the hassle their companies encounter while trying to do business on the mainland.

China's censorship and surveillance regime at home and its state-led, subsidised agenda to dominate cutting-edge industries have increased worries about allowing the country access to advanced Western technology, closing doors to Chinese companies from New Zealand to Germany.

Perhaps the authorities in Beijing believe China no longer needs access to the consumers and know-how of the West and its allies. But, with China still trailing the US, Europe and Japan in innovation and wealth, they're taking a big risk

with the country's future.

Huawei might be able to find new customers in Africa and the Middle East; it still needs US microchips for its products to work. In both the US and China, the problem isn't just arrogance. It's isolation.

Chinese President Xi Jinping and US President Donald Trump operate in self-created echo chambers.

Mr Trump has purged just about everybody from this White House who had a dissenting opinion on his trade strategy, while experience in foreign affairs is generally derided as old, failed thinking.

Mr Xi has fostered an environment of such fear that only the bravest of souls would dare speak their minds openly and honestly.

Neither leader seems to take much interest in understanding the position of the other country.

A superficial trade deal won't solve any of these problems, even if it temporarily calms markets.

Tensions will continue until Washington realises the folly of unilateral action in an altered world order and Mr Xi recognises how his subversion of global norms is turning much of the world against China.

Each side is going to have to accept its weaknesses before they can forge a stronger relationship.

BLOOMBERG

• Michael Schuman, who is based in Beijing, is the author of *The Miracle: The Epic Story Of Asia's Quest For Wealth, and Confucius And The World He Created*.



Firefighters battling a wildfire in California last July. The writer says the world is at a point where alarmism and catastrophic thinking over climate change are valuable. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Climate change

Why people need to be frightened

Human complacency and scientific reticence have combined to muffle the message of a catastrophic threat

David Wallace-Wells

Last summer, a heatwave baked the entire Northern Hemisphere, killing dozens from Quebec to Japan. Some of the most destructive wildfires in California history turned more than a million acres to ash, along the way melting the tyres and the sneakers of those trying to escape the flames. Pacific hurricanes forced three million people in China to flee and wiped away almost all of Hawaii’s East Island.

We are living today in a world that has warmed by just 1 deg C since the late 1800s, when records began on a global scale. We are adding planet-warming carbon dioxide to the atmosphere at a rate faster than at any point in human history since the beginning of industrialisation. In October, the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change released what has become known as its “Doomsday” report – “a deafening, piercing smoke alarm going off in the kitchen”, as one UN official described it – detailing climate effects at 1.5 and 2 deg C of warming.

At the opening of a major UN conference two months later, Mr David Attenborough, the mellifluous voice of the BBC’s Planet Earth, put it even more bleakly: “If we don’t take action, the collapse of our civilisations and the extinction of much of the natural world is on the horizon.”

TABOO OF ALARMISM

Scientists have felt this way for a while. But they have not often talked like it. For decades, there were few things with a worse reputation than “alarmism” among those studying climate change. This is a bit strange. You don’t typically hear from public health experts about the need for circumspection in describing the risks of carcinogens, for instance.

The climatologist James Hansen, who testified before the United States Congress about global warming in 1988, has called the phenomenon “scientific reticence” and chastised his colleagues for it – for editing their own observations so conscientiously that they failed to communicate how dire the threat actually was.

That tendency metastasised even as the news from research grew bleaker. So for years the publication of every major paper, essay or book would be attended by a cloud of commentary debating its precise calibration of

perspective and tone, with many of those articles seen by scientists as lacking an appropriate balance between bad news and optimism, and labelled “fatalistic” as a result.

Last year, their circumspection began to change, perhaps because all that extreme weather wouldn’t permit it not to. Some scientists even began embracing alarmism – particularly with that UN report.

The research it summarised was not new, and temperature rises beyond 2 deg C were not even discussed, though warming on that scale is where we are headed.

Though the report – the product of nearly 100 scientists from around the world – did not address any of the scarier possibilities for warming, it did offer a new form of permission to the world’s scientists. The thing that was new was the message: It is OK, finally, to freak out. Even reasonable.

This, to me, is progress. Panic might seem counterproductive, but we are at a point where alarmism and catastrophic thinking are valuable, for several reasons.

The first is that climate change is a crisis precisely because it is a looming catastrophe that demands an aggressive global response, now. In other words, it is right to be alarmed.

The emissions path we are on today is likely to take us to 1.5 deg C of warming by 2040, 2 deg C within decades after that and perhaps 4 deg C by 2100. As temperatures rise, this could mean many of the biggest cities in the Middle East and South Asia would become lethally hot in summer, perhaps as soon as 2050.

There would be unstoppable disintegration of the West Antarctic’s ice sheet, which some scientists believe has already begun, threatening the world’s coastal cities with inundation. And there would be tens of millions of climate refugees, fleeing droughts, flooding and extreme heat, and the possibility of multiple climate-driven natural disasters striking simultaneously.

There are many reasons to think we may not get to 4 deg C warming, but globally, emissions are still growing, and the time we have to avert what is now thought to be catastrophic warming – 2 deg C – is shrinking by the day.

So being alarmed is not a sign of being hysterical; when it comes to climate change, being alarmed is what the facts demand.

This helps explain the second reason alarmism is useful: By defining the boundaries of conceivability more accurately, catastrophic thinking makes it

easier to see the threat of climate change clearly.

For years, we have read in newspapers as 2 deg C of warming was invoked as the highest tolerable level, beyond which disaster would ensue. Warming greater than that was rarely discussed outside scientific circles. And so it was easy to develop an intuitive portrait of the landscape of possibilities that began with the climate as it exists today and ended with the pain of 2 deg C, the ceiling of suffering. In fact, it is almost certainly a floor.

By far the likeliest outcomes for the end of this century fall between 2 deg C and 4 deg C of warming. And so looking squarely at what the world might look like in that range – 2 deg C, 3 deg C, 4 deg C – is much better preparation for the challenges we will face than retreating into the comforting relative normalcy of the present.

THE COST OF COMPLACENCY

The third reason is while concern about climate change is growing, complacency remains a much bigger political problem than fatalism.

In December, a national survey tracking Americans’ attitudes towards climate change found that 73 per cent said global warming was happening, the highest percentage since the question began being asked in 2008. But a majority of Americans were unwilling to spend even US\$10 (\$\$13.50) a month to address global warming; most drew the line at US\$1 a month, according to a poll conducted the previous month. Last fall, voters in

The emissions path we are on today is likely to take us to 1.5 deg C of warming by 2040, 2 deg C within decades after that and perhaps 4 deg C by 2100. As temperatures rise, this could mean many of the biggest cities in the Middle East and South Asia would become lethally hot in summer, perhaps as soon as 2050.

Washington, a green state, rejected even a modest carbon-tax plan.

A fourth argument for embracing catastrophic thinking comes from history. Fear can mobilise, even change the world.

When conservationist Rachel Carson published her landmark anti-pesticide polemic Silent Spring, Life magazine said she had “overstated her case”, and The Saturday Evening Post dismissed the book as “alarmist”. But it almost single-handedly led to a nationwide ban on DDT.

Throughout the Cold War, foes of nuclear weapons did not shy away from warning of the horrors of mutually assured destruction, and in the 1980s and 1990s, campaigners against drink driving did not feel obligated to make their case simply by celebrating sobriety.

But perhaps the strongest argument for the wisdom of catastrophic thinking is that all of our mental reflexes run in the opposite direction, towards disbelief about the possibility of very bad outcomes.

I know this from personal experience. I have spent the past three years buried in climate science and following the research as it expanded into ever darker territory. The number of “good news” scientific papers that I have encountered in that time I could probably count on my two hands. The “bad news” papers number probably in the thousands.

I know the science is true, and I know its effects. And yet, when I imagine my life three decades from now, or the life of my daughter five decades from now, I have to admit that I am not imagining a world on fire but one similar to the one we have now. That is how hard it is to shake complacency.

LIVING IN DENIAL

We are all living in delusion, unable to really process the news from science about an all-encompassing threat.

How can we be this deluded? One answer comes from behavioural economics. We build our view of the universe outwards from our own experience, a reflexive tendency that surely shapes our ability to comprehend genuinely existential threats to the species. We have a tendency to wait for others to act, rather than acting ourselves; a preference for the present situation; a disinclination to change things; and an excess of confidence that we can change things easily, should we need to, no matter the scale.

The sum total of these biases is what makes climate change something ecological theorist Timothy Morton calls a “hyperobject” – a conceptual fact so large and complex that it can never be properly comprehended.

In his book Worst-Case Scenarios, legal scholar Cass Sunstein wrote that in general, we have a problem considering unlikely but potential risks, which we run from either into complacency or paranoia.

His solution is a wonky one: We should all be more rigorous in our cost-benefit analysis. That climate change demands expertise, and faith in it, at precisely the moment when public confidence in expertise is collapsing is one of its many paradoxes.

WHAT’S TO BE DONE

So what can we do? And by the way, who’s “we”? The size of the threat from climate change means that organisation is necessary at every level – communities, states, nations and international agreements that coordinate action among them. But most of us don’t live in the halls of the United Nations or the boardrooms in which the Paris climate agreement was negotiated. Instead we live in a consumer culture that tells us we can make our political mark on the world through where we shop, what we wear, how we eat. This is how we get things like The Lancet’s recent dietary recommendations for those who want to eat to mitigate climate change – less meat, more vegetables.

But conscious consumption is a cop-out, a neoliberal diversion from collective action, which is what is necessary. People should try to live by their own values, about climate as with everything else, but the effects of individual lifestyle choices are ultimately trivial compared with what politics can achieve.

Buying an electric car is a drop in the bucket compared with raising fuel-efficiency standards sharply. Conscientiously flying less is a lot easier if there’s more high-speed rail around. And if I eat fewer hamburgers a year, so what? But if cattle farmers were required to feed their cattle seaweed, which might reduce methane emissions by nearly 60 per cent according to one study, that would make an enormous difference.

That is what is meant when politics is called a “moral multiplier”. That is the purpose of politics: That we can be and do better together than we might manage as individuals. And politics, suddenly, is on fire with climate change. Last fall, in Britain, an activist group with the alarmist name Extinction Rebellion was formed and immediately grew so large it was able to paralyse parts of London in its first major protest. Its leading demand: “Tell the truth.”

Of course, environmental activism isn’t new. But that alarm is cascading upwards, too. In the US Congress, Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez of New York has rallied liberal Democrats around a Green New Deal – a call to reorganise the American economy around clean energy and renewable prosperity.

Businessman and politician Michael Bloomberg has said he will insist that any candidate the Democrats put forward has a concrete plan for the climate. This is what the beginning of a solution looks like – though only a very beginning, and only a partial solution.

We have probably squandered the opportunity to avert 2 deg C of warming, but we can avert 3 deg C and certainly all the terrifying suffering that lies beyond that threshold. But the longer we wait, the worse it will get. Which is one last argument for catastrophic thinking: What creates more sense of urgency than fear? NYTIMES

• David Wallace-Wells is a columnist and deputy editor at New York magazine and the author of the forthcoming The Uninhabitable Earth: Life After Warming, from which this essay is adapted.

Companies need fewer mystics and more critical thinkers

Izabella Kaminska

Long-winded, self-aggrandising titles aimed at remunerating employees with status rather than pay are hardly a new thing.

We have all been exposed to the occasional “Global Head of Personal and Corporate Sales and Co-head and President of Execution Services, Emea, Asean and UK; Chair of the Steering Committee for Services, Sales and Executions, BSC, MSC, MBA, GSCE(s)” and thought to ourselves: What on earth is that?

But something new is happening in the world of title inflation. Where preposterous titles in the past concentrated on over-defining job roles in excruciating detail, today’s vogue is for exactly the opposite. The more ambiguous, meaningless and mystical, the better.

Some might suggest the trend reflects an increasingly edgy and innovative corporate sector that welcomes young people and free thinkers, especially in the executive class. But I would argue it hints at something more worrying: A lack of corporate understanding about what a company’s purpose in society and the marketplace really is these days.

It may be true that new technologies come with new ways of doing things; new ways of doing things demand new types of jobs; and new types of jobs demand new titles. There is nothing sinister or exceptional in that. But today’s job abstractionism doesn’t feel progressive, forward-thinking or scientific. The parallel, if anything, is with a feudal, out-of-touch, ruling class that indulged in advice from mystics, prophets and oracles to suspend reality rather than engage with it.

Search LinkedIn for just a few minutes and you will get a hint of the trend I’m talking about. There are 41 results for “chief future officer”, 44 for “chief joy officer”, 52 for “chief happiness officer”, 63 for “chief thinking officer”, 170 for a “chief vision officer”, 197 futurists and 354 futurologists. Move over to the even more abstract and you discover 6,158 “evangelists”, 15,145 “thought leaders” and a whopping 245,167 “influencers”.

What is going on? In seeking an answer, a good place to start is the arrival of AOL’s self-styled “digital prophet” Shingy (David Shing) in 2011. On the surface, the role entailed looking wacky and mysterious on the conference circuit. Shingy is now famous for being Shingy. Unfortunately, no one under the age of 40 is any wiser about AOL.

But linking the rise of corporate mysticism to malaise and stagnation isn’t entirely fair. For example, Mr Jeff Barr at Amazon Web Services has occupied the role of some sort of “evangelist” for almost two decades.

In that time, Amazon has grown to become the third-largest corporation in the world. But does its success disprove the theory that crazy title-mongering is symptomatic of a deeper crisis of meaning and purpose in the corporate sphere?

We live in a world in which investors demand hyper-growth from would-be corporate success stories. Understandably, companies need to justify their other-worldly ambitions.

Appointing sycophantic mystics who can tell fanciful stories about the good that can be done, if and when absolute power is achieved, is one way to do it. How else can you sell total market dominance and monopoly to yourself and others?

From Merlin to Rasputin, the role of chief mystic has always been to provide vindication for the pursuit of outsized power while keeping reality at bay. The same is true of their corporate successors today.

The danger comes in the malleability of the narratives if and when a region or population no longer supports your corporate power agenda. Amazon’s recent retreat from New York is a case in point. And that is the problem: Wishy-washy roles encourage wishy-washy thinking, which distracts leaders and investors from the realities at hand.

The corporate world would be much better off with more chief critical thinking officers ready to speak truth to power rather than fanning it further.

Sadly, there are no such roles on LinkedIn. FINANCIAL TIMES

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WEATHER

Windy, with passing showers in the afternoon.
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PHOTO: XINHUA

Crossing over into a new year

Dancers in colourful costumes twirled their way across the Quan-jiao Taiping Bridge in Chuzhou city, in China's eastern Anhui province, yesterday.

The performance was to celebrate the 16th day of the first lunar month of the new year, reported

Xinhua news agency.

The annual celebration dates back to the Han Dynasty almost 2,000 years ago, when residents would go to the bridge to pray for good luck for the new year. It is also believed that walking on the bridge will keep away illnesses.

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SHOWCASING IMAGES OF EARLY S'PORE B6

Move to ensure telco bills are more transparent

Inclusion of charges for value-added or third-party services among IMDA proposals

Lester Wong

All telcos here could soon be required to provide a standardised breakdown of charges when billing customers, under new requirements proposed by the Infocomm Media Development Authority (IMDA) yesterday.

IMDA had received feedback from consumers on how billing information can vary across service providers, with some telcos providing a more detailed breakdown than others.

Specifically, telcos will need to include charges for value-added or

third-party services under the new Converged Code. The increased clarity will help facilitate the resolution of billing disputes, said IMDA.

Examples of such charges include those for roaming, Premium Rate Services (PRS), global SMS/MMS and excess usage.

Dozens of customers of the three major telcos – Singtel, M1 and StarHub – had taken to Facebook and online forums in February and March last year to complain of PRS charges for services they did not sign up for.

The move is among a raft of changes IMDA is seeking views on

for its proposed converged competition code in a public consultation that ends on April 17.

The Converged Code merges the existing competition and consumer protection frameworks for the telecommunication and media markets so regulation can be applied more consistently across the two sectors.

This follows the enactment of the Telecommunications (Amendment) Act in February 2017.

The review is necessary given advancements in digital and information technologies such as video streaming over the Internet and the evolution of business models.

NEED FOR CHANGE

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“

MS AILEEN CHIA, deputy chief executive and director-general (Telecoms & Post) at IMDA, on the proposed Converged Code.

“This review seeks to... provide greater clarity to our licensees amid the fast-changing digital landscape,” said IMDA deputy chief executive and director-general (Telecoms & Post) Aileen Chia.

“At the same time, the proposed changes will foster innovation in the market while safeguarding consumers' interests.”

Other key changes include requiring all telecommunication and pay-TV service providers here to provide consumers a summary of the key terms and conditions in their contracts at the point of subscription.

Currently, the three major telcos

are prohibited from making any disadvantageous mid-contract changes such as price increases or reductions of service features during the contract term.

IMDA has proposed to extend the prohibition to all telecommunication licensees which would include virtual telcos such as CirclesLife and Zero1, which have entered the market over the last two years.

After reviewing comments received on the changes, IMDA plans to launch a second public consultation at the end of the year on a draft version of the code.



Dozens of customers of the three major telcos had taken to social media and online forums last year to complain of Premium Rate Services charges for services they did not sign up for. The move to provide a standardised breakdown of charges would help facilitate the resolution of billing disputes, said IMDA. ST FILE PHOTO

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Taxi catches fire on CTE, cabby taken to hospital

A taxi driver was taken to hospital after his cab caught fire on the Central Expressway (CTE) yesterday afternoon.

The Singapore Civil Defence Force (SCDF) said it responded to the fire along the CTE towards Yishun, before Exit 7A, at about 2.35pm. Exit 7A leads to Moulmein Road.

Two compressed air foam backpacks and an extinguisher were used to put out the fire, SCDF said.

The driver was taken to Tan Tock Seng Hospital.

SCDF is investigating the cause of the fire.

When The Straits Times arrived at the scene at around 2.45pm, the front of the TransCab taxi was in flames.

Black, thick smoke could be seen rising from the hood of the vehicle.

When contacted, a TransCab spokesman said the taxi driver was doing fine.

She said that prior to the incident, three passengers had alighted from the taxi.

"We are still investigating the cause of the fire," she added.

Tee Zhuo



When The Straits Times arrived at the scene at around 2.45pm, the front of the TransCab taxi was in flames. The driver was taken to Tan Tock Seng Hospital. ST PHOTO: KUA CHEE SIONG

Low premiums fuel record COE renewals for cars

Lifespan of 37,114 cars extended last year, 20% more than previous peak in 2017

57%

Percentage of COE extensions that were for cars up to 1,600cc. The rest were for cars above 1,600cc, for which most owners chose a 10-year extension, unlike the other group.

60,000

Number of cars reaching 10 years old this year, down from 80,000 last year.

Christopher Tan
Senior Transport Correspondent

A record 37,114 certificates of entitlement (COEs) for cars were extended beyond their 10-year lifespan last year – about 20 per cent more than in 2017, the previous record year.

The trend was fuelled largely by relatively low COE premiums, which had hovered at their lowest in five to eight years during the year.

According to newly released figures from the Land Transport Authority, about 57 per cent of extensions were for cars up to 1,600cc.

The rest were for cars above 1,600cc, for which most owners

chose a 10-year extension, unlike the other group.

Freelance writer Lionel Seah, 62, said extending the COE of his BMW 525i was a “no-brainer”. He paid close to \$38,000 for a 10-year extension, forgoing at the same time the car’s scrap rebate of around \$28,000.

“So it works out to be just over \$6,000 per year of depreciation over the next 10 years,” Mr Seah said. “If I bought a new 5-series, it would have cost me \$250,000 – or an annual depreciation of over \$20,000. That’s three times more. It’s mind-boggling.”

Furthermore, he said his car is still “running sweet... and creamy”.

Besides minor wear-and-tear parts, he said he did not replace anything. “Surprisingly, there are no cracks or tears on the leather upholstery even,” he added.

Lawyer Sarjeet Singh, 53, topped up the COE on his Mini Cooper S by 10 years last year too, describing it as “the best decision” he has made.

“This is the last of the super-charged engines,” he said, adding that its reliability has been “bullet proof”.

Like Mr Seah, he only had to replace wear-and-tear parts like suspension bushings and engine mounts. “The upholstery is in mint condition,” he noted.

Workshops also saw an uptick in business from motorists who had decided to keep their old rides.

Mr Joey Lim, managing director of independent workshop Harmony Motor, said the number of such customers “more than doubled” last year.

“These cars are usually those with good engines and transmissions,” Mr Lim said. “Mostly, the owners will just change all the fluids, shock absorbers and some other undercarriage parts.”

ComfortDelGro Engineering’s Spark Car Care has also seen business increase on this front. A spokesman said the number of drive-in customers looking to prepare their cars for COE extension has gone up.

“Their average spending has also gone up,” she added, refusing to cite figures because of “competitive reasons”.

The COE renewal trend has contributed to this year’s reduction in COE supply, which is determined largely by number of cars scrapped.

Observers said if all those who extended COEs had scrapped their cars instead, the COE supply would grow, not shrink.

Motor traders reckon the number of COE renewals will dip this year if COE prices continue to rise.

They also pointed out that there are fewer cars reaching 10 years of age than last year – 60,000 this year compared with 80,000 last year.

chrisan@sph.com.sg

	Cars up to 1,600cc or 130bhp	Cars above 1,600cc or 130bhp	Commercial vehicles	Motorcycles	Open
Yesterday's tender	\$26,301	\$35,403	\$26,914	\$3,689	\$36,667
Feb 8 tender	\$25,689	\$34,509	\$26,378	\$3,709	\$35,310

Source: LAND TRANSPORT AUTHORITY STRAITS TIMES GRAPHICS

COE prices mostly higher amid smaller supply

Certificate of entitlement (COE) prices ended mostly higher in the latest tender yesterday, as dealers jostled to deliver cars amid a smaller COE supply.

The COE premium for cars up to 1,600cc and 130bhp was at a three-month high of \$26,301, up 2.4 per cent from two weeks ago. The COE price for cars above 1,600cc or 130bhp finished 2.6 per cent higher at an eight-month high of \$35,403. The price for the Open COE, which can be used for any vehicle type except motorcycles, but ends up largely for bigger cars, also closed at an eight-month high of \$36,667 after posting the biggest increase of 3.8 per cent yesterday.

The commercial vehicle COE premium inched upwards by 2 per cent to finish at \$26,914.

The motorcycle premium, however, bucked the uptrend by ending 0.5 per cent lower, at \$3,689.

Motor dealers said the smaller supply of COEs for the three-month quota period, starting this month, caused prices to creep up. They said parallel importers are also making a comeback after business was dampened by stricter emission rules last year. Indonesia’s Gojek, a newcomer on the private-hire scene, is also believed to be adding pressure for COEs.

Singapore Vehicle Traders Association president Michael Lim said

the latest results were “expected because of the cut in quota”.

“The Budget also provided good news. Earlier, there was some worry that taxes for diesel cars would increase sharply. But, as it turns out, only diesel fuel duty went up by 10 cents,” he added.

He foresees premiums staying stable in the coming months.

Mr Nicholas Wong, general manager of Honda agent Kah Motor, said: “Prices look very firm, especially for Category B (above 1,600cc) and E (Open). But the market itself is not fantastic.” He noted that parallel import sales are starting to grow, and Gojek could be fuelling demand for cars.

Christopher Tan

Motor dealers said the smaller supply of COEs for the three-month quota period, starting this month, caused prices to creep up. They said parallel importers are also making a comeback after business was dampened by stricter emission rules last year.

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Carousell launching new review system and tech to tackle fraudsters

Cara Wong

To counter the rise in e-commerce scams, Carousell plans to use new technology to identify and block fraudsters from creating new accounts.

The online selling platform will also launch a feedback system allowing buyers to review sellers, so customers can have a better idea of vendors’ behaviour, the company said on Tuesday.

E-commerce scams jumped to 2,125 cases last year, up by 11.4 per cent from 1,907 cases in 2017. About 70 per cent of them took place on Carousell, police said in their annual crime briefing yesterday.

However, according to Carousell’s calculations, its fraud rate has fallen by 44 per cent from the first quarter of last year.

In the fourth quarter of last year, only about three in 10,000 transac-

tions were fraudulent, said Carousell’s vice-president of operations, Ms Tan Su Lin.

Ms Tan added that the company had taken measures to prevent fraud over the past year.

In June last year, it introduced Caroupay, a payment system which holds a buyer’s payment and releases it to the seller only when both parties are satisfied with the transaction.

The firm also introduced fraud detection technology last year that can automatically detect and take down malicious online content.

Its team of content moderators – which reviews user reports and takes down bad accounts or listings – has been doubled in size to cover more content faster.

“Taking heart from the fact that our efforts have produced really good results, we’re pushing at it and we’re doing more,” said Ms Tan.

Carousell will soon roll out new

AIMING FOR ‘CLOSE TO ZERO’ SCAMS

As with crimes all over the world, I think no city can boast zero scams, so our target is to drive it (the number of scams) as close to zero as we can.



MS TAN SU LIN, Carousell’s vice-president of operations, saying the firm will continue to have zero tolerance towards scams.

digital fingerprinting technology to prevent repeat fraudsters from creating new accounts to cheat users.

It identifies a fraudster’s “digital persona”, picking out a set of digital signals that fraudsters leave behind on the Internet which would single them out when they try to create new accounts.

“You close one door, and they (fraudsters) open another window somewhere else, so we do prioritise doing things that stop them from coming back,” said Ms Tan.

Carousell will also launch a new user feedback and star rating system on its app, where buyers can rate sellers on specific details of the transactions, such as the quality of goods.

Potential buyers would thus have a better idea of which sellers to trust, said Ms Tan.

She acknowledged that scams could still happen on the platform, but added that the company will continue to have zero tolerance towards scams.

“As with crimes all over the world, I think no city can boast zero scams, so our target is to drive it (the number of scams) as close to zero as we can.”

carawang@sph.com.sg

Facebook's review board could include S'pore experts

Political content may be one area it oversees; workshop to gather feedback kicks off here

Yuen Sin

Representatives from Singapore are among potential members to sit on an independent board Facebook is planning to set up to review appeals on its content decisions.

One area where the board could have oversight would be political content, which a regional centre in Singapore will be monitoring closely ahead of upcoming elections in countries such as Thailand and Indonesia.

Details on the board, which is to be established by the end of this year, are being hammered out, Facebook's vice-president of global policy management Monika Bickert told The Straits Times.

She was in Singapore yesterday to start a two-day workshop to gather feedback on the proposed board from about 50 representatives from Singapore and the Asia-Pacific. It is being held at the Facebook office in South Beach Tower.

More workshops will follow in other cities such as New Delhi and Berlin in the coming months, though Facebook declined to disclose the identities of the organisations and individuals attending the workshops.

When established, the board members of up to 40 global experts and its decisions on appeal will be made public.

Users – from individuals to large organisations – can appeal to the board if they want to contest decisions on content that have been removed by Facebook's content review team, or if a post that they have reported for violating community standards does not get taken down by Facebook.

Ms Bickert, 42, who leads Facebook's global content policy team, said the board will handle mainly "edge cases", which refer to content that may not contravene rules under its community standards at first glance, but which may still be seen as problematic to some communities – or vice versa.

One example of such content would be Facebook's widely panned decision to censor an iconic Vietnam War photo of a naked girl escaping a napalm bombing in 2016.

The photo was initially removed as it had contravened Facebook's policy on child nudity, said Ms Bickert.

The image was later reinstated and new policies were introduced to allow graphic content that is newsworthy or of public interest to stay up. But similar situations where content may be deemed acceptable or not, depending on cultural con-

text, may still crop up in future.

"Our policies have helped us deal with these edge cases, but it's not perfect because people may say that they will decide differently... That's why we are doing these workshops to figure out how to get truly global representation that can also take into account how content affects people locally," said Ms Bickert.

Facebook, which has come under fire for its role in alleged Russian meddling in the 2016 US presidential election, has also learnt from the



ACCOUNTING FOR LOCAL VARIATION

Our policies have helped us deal with these edge cases, but it's not perfect because people may say that they will decide differently... That's why we are doing these workshops to figure out how to get truly global representation that can also take into account how content affects people locally.



MS MONIKA BICKERT, vice-president of global policy management at Facebook, on the type of cases the planned review board on content decisions will mainly handle.

ST PHOTO: KEVIN LIM

past and taken steps towards maintaining the integrity of elections over the past 1½ years, she said.

These include making sure that its officers are actively engaging electoral commissions and political groups on the ground in countries where there are planned elections,

as well as weeding out fake accounts that are often the culprits of political disinformation.

Today, more than a million fake Facebook accounts are removed on a daily basis, she said.

It was also reported that Facebook will begin vetting political ad-

vertisers in Europe and displaying who paid for specific ads from next month, ahead of European Union elections in May.

Asked if such features could be rolled out in Singapore, Ms Bickert said Facebook is still in the midst of learning from and refining its poli-

cies on elections, and coming up with those that would work in different jurisdictions.

"We are trying to see what makes sense in each location and building solutions based on that reality."

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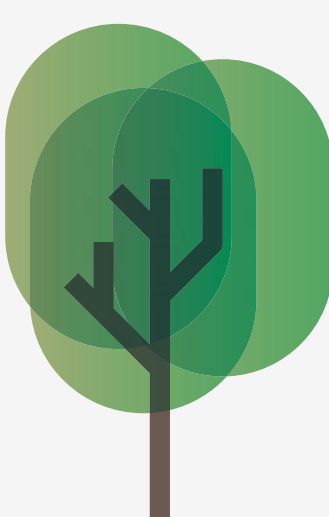
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Ties that bind across generations of MPs



Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong tossing yusheng with (from far left) former deputy prime minister Wong Kan Seng, first-generation leader Ong Pang Boon and former Cabinet minister S. Dhanabalan at the Istana on Tuesday. PM Lee was hosting several generations of People's Action Party MPs to a Chinese New Year lunch.

The other guests included former Speaker of Parliament Tan Soo Khoon and former Cabinet ministers Ahmad Mattar and Lim Hwee Hua.

Also in attendance were former senior parliamentary secretaries Mohamad Maidin Packer and Hawazi Daipi, as well as former MPs Hong Hai, P. Selvadurai and Ho Geok Choo.

Current MPs and Cabinet ministers also attended the event, including Trade and Industry Minister Chan Chun Sing and Education Minister Ong Ye Kung.

Mr Lee shared photos of the lunch on Facebook.

"They have served for many years, and many continue to be active in the community," he wrote of his meeting with the former MPs. "Grateful for their friendship and camaraderie."

The lunch was held on the 15th and last day of Chinese New Year, which is known as chap goh mei. It is also popularly known as the Chinese Valentine's Day.

In a separate Facebook post on the lunch, Mr Hawazi wrote that the seven retired MPs at his table, including Dr S. Vasoo and Mr Tang See Chim, had collectively served more than 130 years. "We shared fond memories serving Singapore as MPs and future challenges facing Singapore," he said.

PHOTO: FACEBOOK/LEE HSIEEN LOONG

HomeBriefs

11 nabbed over illegal marine gas oil sale

Police yesterday said they have arrested 11 men for their suspected involvement in an illegal transaction of marine gas oil.

The men, aged between 22 and 44, were caught at sea off Jurong Island by the Police Coast Guard in a joint operation with the Maritime and Port Authority of Singapore.

Six were from a craft belonging to a marine service provider and are believed to have stolen two metric tonnes of marine gas oil. They are expected to be charged today with criminal breach of trust as a servant.

They had sold the oil to five crew members of a foreign-registered tugboat, which has been seized for investigations. The five are also expected to be charged today with dishonestly receiving stolen property.

Two caught trying to enter S'pore illegally

Two persons were arrested for attempting to enter Singapore illegally on Feb 10, the police and the Immigration and Checkpoints Authority (ICA) said yesterday.

The Police Coast Guard and ICA had detected a wooden boat heading towards Singapore with two people – aged 16 and 21 – on board in the waters off East Coast Park at 10.46pm that day. They were intercepted and later arrested at 11.33pm.

The Straits Times understands that both are Indonesian nationals.

The man was jailed for six weeks and given four strokes of the cane, while the boy was given a stern warning in lieu of prosecution.

Under the Immigration Act, those convicted of attempted unlawful entry can be jailed for up to six months, and given at least three strokes of the cane.

Train Brand Haw Flakes recalled after woman says she bit into glass

In separate case, AVA fines a firm \$1,600 for selling food products with fraudulent expiry dates

Tee Zhuo

A brand of haw flakes snack has been voluntarily recalled by its supplier in Singapore after a consumer claimed that she had bitten into a piece of glass while eating it.

Mr Albert Goh, Sinhua Hock Kee Trading's business development and marketing executive, told The Straits Times that it asked supermarket chains to recall Train Brand Haw Flakes on Tuesday after receiving the complaint.

When contacted, the Agri-Food and Veterinary Authority of Singapore (AVA) said it has received feedback on this and is investigating.

The affected batch comes in a nine-piece pack and has an expiry date of Dec 31, 2020. The recall will

be completed by tomorrow.

Mr Goh said the snack is manufactured in China and the firm has not yet received the affected product. "We take food safety seriously. We are curious about how there was glass in the product, as all the equipment used at the factory is made of stainless steel," he said.

He added that the woman, who gave her name as Ms Koh, e-mailed the firm and complained of a sore throat. She said that she bought the product at a Sheng Siong supermarket branch. The firm has offered to foot the bill for any medical check-up she might undergo, said Mr Goh.

A Sheng Siong spokesman said the supplier had brought the issue to its attention and the supermarket had taken the product off its shelves. Customers who bought the product from the batch with the specified expiry date can seek a refund at its stores, she said, adding that the affected customer, Ms Koh, can call the supermarket on 6895-1888 for help.

TAKING FOOD SAFETY SERIOUSLY

We take food safety seriously. We are curious about how there was glass in the product, as all the equipment used at the factory is made of stainless steel.

MR ALBERT GOH, business development and marketing executive of Sinhua Hock Kee Trading, on why the company is conducting the voluntary recall.

Separately, AVA said GoPurpose was fined \$1,600 yesterday for selling food products labelled with fraudulent expiry dates.

AVA received feedback in June

last year that GoPurpose might have sold Chaga Health pre-packed food products beyond their recommended expiry dates.

Investigations revealed that the firm had replaced the original expiry dates on the products with new dates that went beyond the manufacturer's recommended date.

Under the Sale of Food Act (Food Regulations), those found guilty can be fined up to \$1,000 for a first conviction, and up to \$2,000 for subsequent convictions.

In its statement yesterday, AVA said all pre-packed food products for sale in Singapore must be labelled according to the general labelling requirements of the Singapore Food Regulations.

It added that accurate date-marking of expiry dates for products is important as products past their expiry dates might have deteriorated in quality. "AVA takes a serious view of false and inaccurate labelling of food," it said.

teezhuo@sph.com.sg

Six soldiers lauded for responding to road accident

Six soldiers have been commended by the Singapore Army for responding to an accident on Mandai Road.

A 46-year-old man was injured after he was hit by a minibus on Monday at 8.52am outside Mandai Hill Camp. The injured man was subsequently taken to hospital, while the male driver of the bus was arrested.

Shin Min Daily News reported that the man had been seen crossing the road several times before the accident happened.

In a Facebook post yesterday, the Army identified the soldiers as Captain (Dr) Vikram Manian, Third Sergeant Ni Xu Gang Metta, Corporal Joseph B. Aravind Krishna, Corporal Kinson Tan Kai Feng and Lance Corporal David Lee Wei Ming.

The soldiers, who had been going about their daily duties, rushed to the scene after they were informed



(From left) Cpl Joseph Andrei Aczon Dacanay, 3SG Ni Xu Gang Metta, Cpt (Dr) Vikram Manian, Cpl B. Aravind Krishna, LCP David Lee Wei Ming and Cpl Kinson Tan Kai Feng went to the aid of the injured man. PHOTO: FACEBOOK/THE SINGAPORE ARMY

of the accident at about 9am.

"After an initial assessment by the medical officer, Cpt (Dr) Vikram, they provided cervical spine stabilisation, compression and dressing to the head wound preventing further escalation of the injury," the Army said.

"Our Singapore Army would like to wish the injured man a speedy recovery and commend our servicemen for always being ready to step forward when the need arises!"

Cpt Vikram said the injured man was lying motionless on the road

when the medics arrived. After he did an initial assessment, the group then proceeded to give first aid.

Cpt Vikram said the main aim was to prevent further escalation of the injuries before Singapore Civil Defence Force paramedics arrived.

3SG Metta said: "As a soldier and a trained medic, we were taught that we have to care beyond our military community."

"We have to care for anyone in need in our civilian society as well."

Toh Ting Wei

No change to CPF interest rates for second quarter

Linette Lai

The interest rates for all Central Provident Fund (CPF) accounts will remain unchanged in the second quarter of this year, said the CPF Board and Housing Board in a joint statement yesterday.

This means that the concessionary interest rate for HDB mortgage loans, which is pegged at 0.1 per cent above the CPF Ordinary Account (OA) interest rate, will also remain unchanged at 2.6 per cent yearly for that time period.

The Special and Medisave Account interest rate will be maintained at 4 per cent a year from April 1 to June 30, while the Retirement Account (RA) interest rate will be kept at 4 per cent a year from Jan 1 to Dec 31.

The OA interest rate will be kept at 2.5 per cent a year. This means that CPF members will continue to earn interest rates of up to 3.5 per cent yearly on their OA funds and up to 5 per cent yearly on their Special and Medisave Accounts.

For their RA funds, members will earn interest rates of up to 5 per cent a year in 2019.

"These interest rates include an extra 1 per cent interest paid on the first \$60,000 of a member's combined balances – with up to \$20,000 from the OA – which is part of the Government's efforts to enhance the retirement savings of CPF members," the CPF Board and Housing Board said.

For CPF members who are 55 and older, there will be an additional 1 per cent interest on the first \$30,000 of their combined balances, on top of the initial 1 per cent paid on the first \$60,000.

This means they will earn up to 6 per cent interest a year on their retirement balances. Extra interest received on the OA will go into the Special Account or RA.

If a member is over 55 and under the CPF Life scheme, the extra interest will still be earned on his combined balances, including savings used for CPF Life.

linettel@sph.com.sg

Pest-control workers didn't mishandle python: AVA

Authority finds force to restrain snake after bite necessary and in good faith to protect the public

QUICK RESPONSE REQUIRED

Our investigation revealed (that) as there was an immediate risk to public safety, where the python was found at a location with high human traffic, your staff had to remove the snake as promptly and practicably as possible.



THE AGRI-FOOD AND VETERINARY AUTHORITY, on how pest-control firm Anticimex handled the snake, as quoted in the firm's statement.

Ng Huiwen

Pest-control workers who were called in to remove a 3m-long python outside Tang Plaza in Orchard Road last month did not mishandle the reptile, said the Agri-Food and Veterinary Authority (AVA).

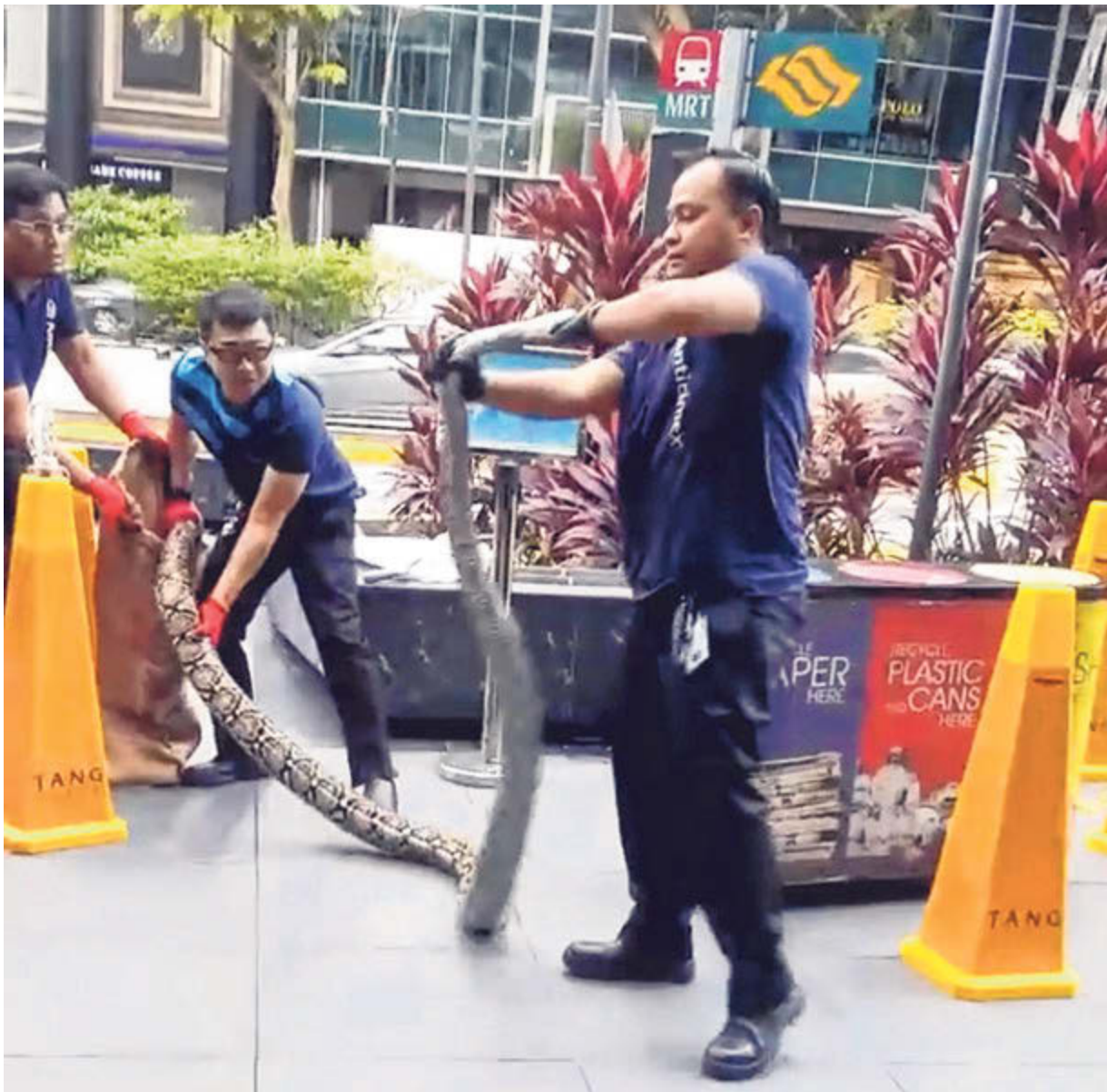
Pest-control firm Anticimex said in a statement on Tuesday that AVA had completed its investigations into the alleged mishandling of the snake on Jan 29 by its employees, and shared the authority's investigation findings.

"Our investigation revealed (that) as there was an immediate risk to public safety, where the python was found at a location with high human traffic, your staff had to remove the snake as promptly and practicably as possible," AVA was quoted as saying in the statement.

Yesterday, AVA confirmed in a statement that the pest-control handlers removed the snake as promptly and practicably as possible.

AVA said a staff member, identified as Mr Farhan, was bitten by the snake while removing it.

"Hence, he had to resort to using necessary force to restrain the



python," the statement said.

The authority added that Mr Farhan had acted in good faith to prevent further harm and injuries to himself as well as members of the public, who were in close proximity.

The snake was removed and handed to Wildlife Reserves Singapore.

Experts earlier criticised the manner in which the snake had been handled, calling it "terrible" and "abusive, untrained and uncaring".

AVA said at the time that it was in-

vestigating the feedback on animal cruelty. It added that cruelty to animals is an offence under the Animals and Birds Act.

But Anticimex managing director of its Asian division Tony Hurst later said not restraining the reptile by any means available, when it tried to evade containment, could have had disastrous consequences in such a busy and populated area.

He also said the manager of the team that tackled the python was

trained in snake handling at the Singapore Zoo.

Mr Farhan had to undergo minor surgery on his hand to remove an embedded snake tooth.

On Tuesday, Anticimex said in its statement that its team would continue to work with experts in the field, and empower its employees to take "immediate and correct actions" in their work.

nghuiwen@sph.com.sg

Cambodia seeking S'pore motorbike owner over fatal hit-and-run accident

David Sun

The Cambodian authorities are seeking the owner of a Singapore-registered motorbike allegedly involved in a hit-and-run accident that killed an elderly man in Phnom Penh.

The accident happened on Feb 7 in Cambodia's capital city, in the Khan Por Senchey area on National Highway 4.

According to Cambodian media reports, the 81-year-old victim was riding his bicycle across the road at about 12.50pm local time (1.50pm Singapore time) when the accident happened.

News site Cambodia News English (CNE) reported that the victim had raised his hands while crossing to signal traffic to slow down.

A "high-powered motorbike" then slammed into him at high speed, killing him instantly.

There were conflicting reports that the motorbike, which was later identified as a BMW R 1200 GS Adventure, had toppled or slowed down after the crash.

But citing eyewitnesses, the reports said the rider, believed to be a woman, did not stop to render aid. Instead the rider, who was dressed in yellow, sped away from the scene.

A piece of debris with the motorbike's BMW logo was found next to the victim.

A photograph showed the victim's distraught family gathering around his body, which was covered up and lying next to the twisted mess that was his bicycle.

In an update on Tuesday, CNE reported that the motorbike was found parked outside a boutique ho-



The Singapore-registered BMW motorbike (with pannier) was found parked outside a boutique hotel near the Phnom Penh Central Market area with a piece of its front end missing. PHOTO: CAMBODIA NEWS ENGLISH

tel near the Phnom Penh Central Market area.

The motorbike was missing a piece from its front end, which matched the debris found at the accident scene. It was adorned with stickers of national flags belonging

to Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand and Laos.

The BMW model has a 1,170cc engine and can reach over 200kmh. It weighs about 260kg and is described on the BMW website as a motorbike able to "overcome every

type of terrain". It costs more than \$50,000 here brand new, inclusive of the certificate of entitlement.

CNE told The New Paper yesterday that it received an anonymous tip-off on Facebook that the owner of the motorbike had returned to Singapore to seek treatment for an injured wrist, but had left the motorbike behind.

The news has riled netizens in Singapore and Cambodia, with many saying the rider has to return to Cambodia to assist in investigations.

Netizens have identified the rider as a mother of two who is affiliated with local rider groups that travel frequently to Malaysia and Thailand.

Checks by TNP on her Facebook page showed several photos which matched the motorbike found outside the hotel in Phnom Penh.

Attempts to contact her have been unsuccessful, and her Facebook page was deactivated yesterday evening.

A close friend of the woman, who did not want to be identified, said he was surprised to hear of the allegations. "This is news to me... She is a close friend," he said. "I've never known her to run away from responsibilities." The man added that she has also not responded to any of his messages.

Another acquaintance of the woman said he is unsure of her whereabouts but confirmed she lives in Singapore.

TNP reported that while the Cambodian authorities are still looking for the woman, they have yet to contact their counterparts in Singapore.

davidsun@sph.com.sg

Okto to be merged with Channel 5 on May 1

Toh Ting Wei

Okto channel will be merged with Channel 5 on May 1, broadcaster Mediacorp said yesterday.

The move will see okto, a channel for children's and sports programming, removed from the television network. Mediacorp is due to return the channel's frequency to the Infocomm Media Development Authority (IMDA) but the brand will remain online on Toggle, the broadcaster's digital entertainment service.

Mediacorp said the move would

combine the best of both channels and make Channel 5 the "definitive English-language channel for families in Singapore".

Its chief customer officer Irene Lim said: "These changes are reflective of our continuous commitment to understand the needs of our audiences and serve them better."

The broadcaster said it will continue to have a strong focus on children's content and sports programming. Okto's content for children will be broadcast on Channel 5, where it will enjoy a wider reach, it said.

Meanwhile, sports programming will be carried across Mediacorp's platforms. Coverage of major sporting events like the Olympics will be provided both on television and Toggle. For school sports, selected finals of national school games will continue to be streamed on Toggle.

Mediacorp said it seeks to deliver content digitally and on television, as its audiences "straddle between the online and offline worlds".

Mr Raymond Lye, chairman of the Programme Advisory Committee for English Programmes (Pace), said the changes made

sense given the change in viewership habits. Pace advises IMDA on the range and quality of English TV and radio programmes, and offers suggestions for improvement.

"Pace has been given the assurance that the quality and quantity of kids' programmes we get on okto will remain unchanged when they move to Channel 5 and Toggle," he said. "As for sports coverage, we are assured of major sporting event coverage, especially where Team Singapore is involved."

twtoh@sph.com.sg

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Teen admits having sex with three minors

18-year-old drug abuser out on bail when he targeted 3rd victim

Shaffiq Alkhatib

A teenage dishwasher, who had sex with two underage girls, was out on bail for drug abuse when he targeted a third minor.

The 18-year-old pleaded guilty in court yesterday to consumption of methamphetamine or Ice, and three counts of having sexual intercourse with the girls.

Eight other charges, mainly for similar offences, will be taken into

consideration during sentencing.

The boy cannot be named due to a gag order to protect the girls' identities.

The first victim was his school-mate and they got to know each other in January 2015. The girl, who was 13 years old at the time, regarded him as her best friend, the court heard.

Some time in early 2016, he started to pester the girl to have sex with him but she rejected his advances.

Deputy Public Prosecutor Asoka Markandu said that on May 20 that year, the boy went to the girl's home after school as she wanted to change her clothes before their

meeting with some friends.

He went to her bedroom and they had sex. The boy dropped out of school soon after and they stopped contacting each other.

The girl later told her school-mates about her sexual encounter and one of them informed their teacher. The girl lodged a police report on Feb 23, 2017.

The boy befriended the second minor, who was then 15 years old, via Facebook in early 2017 and they had sex in his home on Feb 13 that year.

Her mother found out about it and alerted the police on May 15, 2017.

Court documents did not state what happened after the two police reports were made.

On Oct 31, 2017, officers from the Central Narcotics Bureau arrested the boy for suspected drug consumption, and traces of Ice were found in his urine samples.

He was charged on Feb 22 last year and was out on bail when he targeted his third victim, then 13 years old. The pair were in a relationship and had sex four times in early July last year.

On July 8, the girl had a quarrel with her mother who allegedly knocked her daughter's head against a wall. The girl, who complained of pain, was taken to KK Women's and Children's Hospital. She later told a staff nurse about her sexual encounters with her boyfriend and the police were notified.

Yesterday, District Judge May Mesenas called for reports to assess the boy's suitability for probation and reformatory training. Offenders sent to a reformatory training centre follow a strict regimen that includes foot drills and counselling.

The boy is expected to be sentenced on March 12.

ashaffiq@sph.com.sg

Jail, fine for illegal moneylender

A former construction surveyor whose one-man moneylending racket was uncovered during a routine police check has been jailed for 3½ years and fined \$450,000.

Malaysian Looi Teck Hock had been running the business since 2006, but was caught in 2017 when officers screened him at Hougang MRT station and found four bank cards belonging to other men.

Looi, a permanent resident, was arrested after failing to account for how he ended up with the cards.

He was later charged with 122 counts of carrying on an unlicensed moneylending business involving at least 83 debtors. The Straits Times understands that this was the most number of charges and debtors for a one-man operation.

Looi, 47, pleaded guilty to 15 of the charges and the remaining 107 were considered during sentencing.

The scale of the offence was "virtually unprecedented", said District Judge Marvin Bay yesterday.

Deputy Public Prosecutor Dwayne Lum told the court that Looi began moneylending in 2006 while working as a construction surveyor. He initially targeted Thai and Indian construction workers at his company. As the business grew, he would tell them to inform other foreign workers about his services.

DPP Lum said: "The accused would loan money to these foreign workers in cash by hand or via fund transfer. The accused would charge an interest of 10 per cent per month. The debtors would be expected to pay... until the principal loan amount was cleared."

Looi made his customers surrender their ATM cards and PINs (personal identification numbers). He would withdraw the repayment amount when the workers received their salaries in their accounts. After deducting the amounts owed, Looi gave the debtors the rest of their pay.

Looi was retrenched in 2015 but did not bother searching for a job as he regarded his unlicensed moneylending as an "easy profit-making business idea".

The business gradually grew and by the time he was arrested on Aug 10, 2017, he was making annual profits of \$30,000 to \$40,000, or about \$3,000 a month.

Judge Bay said yesterday that Looi had "exploited a vulnerable class of persons". He added: "Looi's imposition of exorbitant... interest on relatively modest sums extended would keep these migrant workers in an extended state of penury and desperation."

First-time offenders convicted of carrying on an unlicensed moneylending business can be jailed for up to four years and fined between \$30,000 and \$300,000 for each charge.

Looi will have to spend an additional 11 months and a week in jail if he is unable to pay the \$450,000 fine.

Shaffiq Alkhatib

Man jailed for cheating 'godma' of \$125,000

Taking advantage of his victim's kindness, a self-employed man lied to his "godma" by claiming to have a tragic family history, and duped the elderly woman into handing him \$125,000 in total.

Malaysian Chin Kok Hin, 46, was jailed for two years and three months yesterday after pleading guilty to three counts of cheating involving \$105,000.

Two other cheating charges were taken into consideration during sentencing.

One of them was linked to his god-mother, Ms Teo Sue Lin, 71, and it involved another \$20,000.

The other involved a second woman identified as Ms Chan Lai Fong, who was cheated of \$15,000.

The court heard that Ms Teo gam-

bled frequently at the Resorts World Sentosa casino and first met Chin early last year. He was also a gambler there, the court heard.

The pair met each other at the casino nearly every day and soon became close.

Deputy Public Prosecutor Alexandria Shamini Joseph said they began to refer to each other as "godma" and "godson".

In April last year, Chin told Ms Teo that he would be giving her five Rolex watches for safekeeping, and claimed that an Indonesian buyer wanted to purchase them.

However, the watches were fake and there was no such buyer.

The DPP added: "He informed her that the Indonesian buyer would be in Singapore about twice

a month. In return, he asked the victim to give him \$50,000 as security and the victim agreed."

Chin also told Ms Teo last April that his sister needed "medical treatment".

DPP Joseph told the court: "The victim felt sorry for the accused because of his tragic family circumstances. Believing that he needed money to pay for his sister's medical treatment, the victim handed a sum of \$30,000 to the accused as a loan."

The next day, Chin phoned Ms Teo, claiming that his sister had died. The elderly woman then handed him \$25,000 as a loan for the "funeral expenses".

When Ms Teo asked Chin when the Indonesian would be arriving, he would make excuses, claiming

that the watch buyer was unavailable. Chin also made numerous excuses when she asked him to repay the loans.

These excuses eventually aroused Ms Teo's suspicions.

On May 22 last year, she took the watches to a shop to verify their authenticity and made a police report when told that they were fakes.

Defence lawyer Christine Liu, who was assigned to the case under the Criminal Legal Aid Scheme, pleaded for a jail term of between 20 and 22 months. She said Chin was "an opportunist whose ruses, played on a single victim, were utterly non-sophisticated".

He has made no restitution.

Shaffiq Alkhatib

Images of early Singapore come alive in ST bicentennial video

Goh Yan Han

The scene that greeted Stamford Raffles and William Farquhar when they arrived, preserved in the earliest surviving drawing of Singapore.

One of the first photos of the view from the historical Fort Canning Hill, where Raffles had a house.

These are some of the rare images from as far back as 1819 that come to life in a special video by The Straits Times to commemorate the 200th anniversary of Singapore's founding.

Launched this month, it is the first of six in a video series on Singapore's bicentennial year with the theme "200 years in 200 seconds".

Other highlights in the video include the founding of the Botanic Gardens in 1859; the opening of the Suez Canal, establishing Singapore as a key trading post, in 1869; and Singapore's first National Day Parade in 1966.

Also captured are more solemn episodes, such as the fall of Singapore to Japan in 1942, and the race riots of the 1960s.

The series is a collaboration between ST's video team, picture desk, and heritage and community correspondent Faith Melody Zacheus.

Old images come alive in the video through the use of cinematographs, but the process was no easy feat.

"The animation work for each photograph took time, as painstaking detail was needed to bring a static image to life," said acting video editor Yeung E-Von.

"Motion animation work included etching out visuals like people and objects in the foreground, separating the image into several layers, and creating motion effects like camera movement," she added.

Visual effects, such as a billowing column of smoke coming out of a moving train, or trees swaying in the wind, helped to add movement and realism to the photographs, said Ms Yeung.

The motion graphics work was done by designer Alexis Gabrielle.

The video took about three months to complete, as producer Olivia Chang worked with Ms Zacheus to highlight the milestones across 200 years of Singapore's history.

They worked with ST's chief photographer Joyce Fang to search for the corresponding photos to tell the story visually, and some of these photos took a month or two



Singapore's first National Day Parade, at the Padang in 1966. PHOTOS: NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF SINGAPORE



In the early 1900s, people made a living growing and selling pineapples.



Indian women carrying pails of latex on their heads in a rubber estate in the 1900s.

menting with different formats, from platform-specific video content such as Facebook live shows to documentaries to short news packages.

In the coming weeks and months, five more videos will be launched in this bicentennial series, covering iconic buildings, heritage foods and fashion.

gyanhan@sph.com.sg

PAINSTAKING WORK

The collections are vast, so it took time to comb through the various categories of photos. And it was also challenging to find historical photos that dated to specific milestones.



STRAITS TIMES CHIEF PHOTOGRAPHER JOYCE FANG



SCAN TO WATCH
Zip through 200 years of Singapore history.
http://str.sg/sg200

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*ITSHOW 2019 runs from March 7 to 10 at Suntec City Singapore. Admission is free. Visit www.comexitshow.com.sg to learn more.

Say cheese

At Booth 6817 of ITSHOW 2019*, try the HERO7 Silver. A stunning GoPro with smooth 4k video and vibrant wide dynamic range photos, it is the perfect travel companion. The HERO7 Silver also comes with an intuitive touch screen and is waterproof, making it easy and safe to use for beginners.



Gastronomic journey

Set a date for March 12 at Spring Court. Dedicated to authentic local Chinese cuisine, the restaurant will serve an eight-course dinner menu curated by Straits Times senior food correspondent, Wong Ah Yoke. This event is under Asian Masters 2019**.



**Asian Masters 2019 features the best of Asian cuisine each month. Visit www.asianmasters.com.sg or call 6319-4038 to make reservations.

Teochew specialities

For Asian Masters 2019** on March 7, head to Teochew Restaurant Huat Kee for the best in Teochew fare. Paired with whiskies from The GlenDronach, the six-course experience is curated by the mother and son team of Madam Loh Hock Eng and Mr Lee Chiang Howe.



askST@NLB is a monthly series of public talks held as part of the National Reading Movement. PHOTOS: ST FILE

askST@NLB
you ask, we answer, come listen

Shoot for the stars

Uncover the trials of sport at next month's askST@NLB talk with guest speaker Jasmine Ser

Being an athlete takes hard work, determination and resilience in the face of challenges. Naturally, all this is easier said than done.

But at next month's askST@NLB, have some questions answered in a talk hosted by Straits Times assistant sports editor Rohit Brijnath and Olympic shooter Jasmine Ser.

Well-known speakers

Rohit has over 30 years of sports writing experience. He has covered five Olympic Games, five Asian Games, three cricket World Cups, over 20 tennis Grand Slams and has even written for the BBC South Asia website.

A trustworthy source of sports opinions and facts, Rohit has co-authored a book with Olympic gold medalist shooter Abhinav Bindra and co-written a book on Singapore's first Olympic champion, swimmer Joseph Schooling.

Guest speaker Jasmine Ser is only 28 but is one of Singapore's most experienced and decorated rifle shooters. A 10m air rifle and 50m three-positions shooter, she has won three gold medals and a silver at the Commonwealth Games, a silver at the Asian Games and seven medals of various colours at the SEA Games.

Articulate and intelligent, Jasmine has also taken part in the 2012 London Olympics and 2016 Rio Olympics. She is currently training for the Tokyo Olympics in 2020.

Monthly talks

askST@NLB is a monthly series of public talks held in conjunction with the National Library Board as part of the National Reading Movement.

Held by seasoned journalists from The Straits Times, these free talks aim to encourage reading in a wide range of genres as well as foster discussions. Topics range from health to education to retirement.

This month's talk, led by Straits Times travel writer Lee Siew Hua and featuring guest speaker Mr Richard Launder, president and chief executive of tour operator Destination America, covered unique travel experiences in America.

askST@NLB

When: March 7, 7pm to 8.30pm

Where: Central Public Library Programme Zone, 100 Victoria Street, National Library Board

Admission: Free

Info: str.sg/askRohit1



Last month's talk featured guest speaker Mr Richard Launder (centre), president of Destination America.



Peranakan flavours

Discover Peranakan cuisine's rich heritage at Pera-Makan, where a variety of classic Nonya recipes are crafted by Chef Kathryn Ho, a fourth-generation Peranakan chef.

The event, part of Asian Masters 2019**, will be held on March 5. The evening's cuisine will be paired with the silky wines of Vinedos Veramonte, including the Sauvignon Blanc, which carries a citrusy aroma with floral notes. Also, Royal Selangor, a Malaysian pewter manufacturer, will be showcasing its Nonya collection to celebrate Peranakan culture.



Spice in the spotlight

Fancy dining at an Indian restaurant that has been awarded one Michelin star three years in a row? Well, at Asian Masters 2019**, you can.

The Song of India, at 33 Scotts Road, is the ultimate luxury fine dining choice for modern Indian cuisine. Led by Chef Manjunath Mural, who has a precise attention to detail and creativity, the restaurant has won the heart of many diners.

The evening's menu will be paired with Jack Daniel whiskies and top bourbons from Woodford Reserve.

**Asian Masters 2019 features the best of Asian cuisine each month. Visit www.asianmasters.com.sg or call 6319-4038 to make reservations.



Power up

Visit Booth 6817 of ITSHOW 2019* to test out the Goal Zero Sherpa 100AC. Airline-approved and travel-ready, it's the perfect power bank.

It boasts innovative features like wireless charging, high-speed power delivery, and a variety of ports to power anything — including MacBooks.

The power bank itself can be charged three different ways: through a wall socket using the Sherpa Power Supply accessory (not included), through an included USB cable, and even with solar power using a compatible solar panel.

*ITSHOW 2019 runs from March 7 to 10 at Suntec City Singapore. Admission is free. Visit www.comexitshow.com.sg to learn more.

THE STRAITS TIMES
A Singapore Press Holdings publication
News Centre
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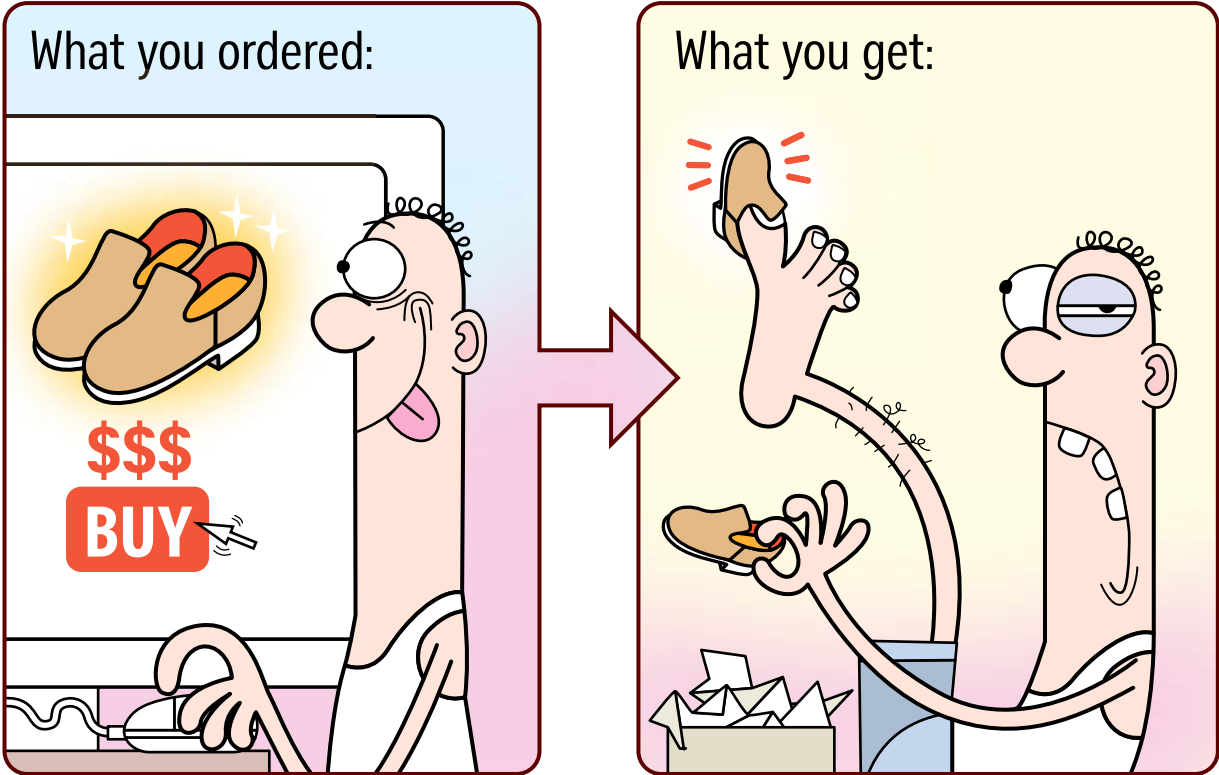
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mie's TAKE

E-commerce scams



Look into what motivates national servicemen

While the recent focus has been on safety, the Singapore Armed Forces (SAF) should look into the motivational and emotional factors affecting our national servicemen as well.

One of my sons has completed his national service, while the other is currently serving.

What puzzles me the most is that both of my sons were very enthusiastic before and during their training in command schools.

But they were left frustrated, demotivated and demoralised after being deployed to operational units.

When asked, both candidly replied that the SAF system is very inefficient, with commanders not giving them mutual respect as fellow soldiers.

Feedback to improve this was disregarded with comments such as “just do as instructed”.

Speaking to some of their friends who are fellow NSFs and NSmen, I found that many held similar views and were beginning to regard NS as a waste of their time.

This is concerning given that these bright young men sacrificed their youth and were looking forward to serving their nation.

I urge the Ministry of Defence to conduct an independent survey to take the pulse of soldiers at every level. The SAF has to improve and find ways to better motivate NSFs and NSmen to serve the nation with pride and sincerity.

Without the right mental attitude, it will be difficult to be an efficient and motivated fighting force.

There is little point in spending billions of dollars on high-tech hardware when the human software is flawed.

Low Hock Chuan

Willpower of individuals will safeguard Singapore

At 104 years old, my grandmother has lived through two world wars.

I grew up listening to war stories, such as of her hiding in the sugar cane fields during World War II, with one child in her arms and the other in womb as Japanese warplanes rained bombs upon Singapore.

Hence, I have never taken the peace we enjoy here in Singapore for granted; even more so after my overseas travels and residencies have taken me to places where chaos, not peace, is a part of life that people are despondently resigned to.

On Total Defence Day, Trade and Industry Minister Chan Chun Sing talked about how Singapore’s total defence has evolved over the years.

More specifically, he shared a story about how he was once an officer tasked with chaperoning a general in town.

In his bid to impress the general, he took the latter to see our tanks on the land, ships in the sea and planes in the air. But none of these impressed the general.

When the formal itinerary concluded, the general curiously pointed to a group of men exercising furiously in the distance; some were tall, some were skinny, some were plump and some were short.

The general asked: “Who are those people?”

Mr Chan replied: “They are my national servicemen doing remedial training as they had flunked their IPPT (Individual Physical Proficiency Test).”

The general listened in disbelief, paused for a few minutes, and asked again if “this was for real”, to which Mr Chan replied: “Yes, of course.”

While no ships we had built or tanks we had purchased had impressed the general, his interest was piqued by the NSmen going through remedial training for having flunked their IPPT.

The general’s departing words to Mr Chan were: “If Singapore’s defence force takes such a serious approach towards its mission, it must be a strong one.”

While military tangibles are necessary, at the end of the day, it is the willpower and discipline of each and every Singaporean that will be instrumental in safeguarding our nation against foreign threats.

Such unified resolve is indubitably a force to be reckoned with.

Lily Ong (Madam)

Are people too easily outraged?

A recent Facebook post showed that user Angeline Lee had taken umbrage at Nanyang Technological University (NTU) for holding a Japanese cultural event on the anniversary of the Sook Ching massacre.

In her Facebook post and subsequent online comments, Ms Lee accused NTU students of being ignorant of history, and likened the event to “holding a Nazi parade on Holocaust day”.

While Ms Lee is certainly entitled to her outrage, it is unfair and inaccurate to compare hosting a Japanese cultural event to celebrating the Sook Ching killings.

The NTU event is foremost a celebration of Japanese culture, where Japanese-themed activities, entertainment and food are shared within the student community.

This is no way disrespects the victims of World War II as they are entirely unrelated.

In the years since the war, Japan and Singapore have enjoyed strong bilateral ties, with Japan providing economic aid for Singapore’s fledgling industries in the early days of its independence (Japan, S’pore and 50 years of post-war friendship, April 26, 2016).

The strong ties enjoyed today would not have been possible without forward-thinking leaders who put aside their wartime wounds to build a strong and economically resilient Singapore.

That said, we must never forget our bloodstained history.

National service is a clear reminder of what happened, and what must never happen again.

Perhaps Ms Lee could consider holding a memorial event on the anniversary of Sook Ching as a way to commemorate and heal wounds, instead of stirring up a storm over the NTU event.

As an alumnus of NTU, I applaud my alma mater’s handling of the incident, by including a minute of silence at the start of the event for those who died in Operation Sook Ching and World War II.

In the aftermath of this, I hope both Ms Lee and NTU students can better appreciate our struggle-filled past, and see similar events in the future not as an affront to painful wartime memories, but as a celebration of cultural diversity and progress.

Jonathan Chiang

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Azhar Kasman is the Editor of Stomp, SPH’s award-winning citizen-journalism site, and also a Content Strategist for SPH’s English, Malay, Tamil Media Group. Besides his editorial duties, Azhar explores new digital technologies and innovations for the newsroom and works closely with business clients to help them conceptualise and execute their digital content strategies.

Navjot Pawera is the director and head of design at Buuuk, a Singapore-based tech studio that has helped government and private organisations win international awards with their innovative digital solutions. He had previously worked with clients in India and Norway before working in Singapore.

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Can S'pore schools deliver feedback more effectively?

In Singapore schools, feedback on students comes through graded assessment papers, twice-a-year report cards and annual parent-teacher sessions. These provide a snapshot of how students are doing academically and socially, but say little about how they can improve.

Does this have a positive impact on student achievement, and is there a better way? Based on research evidence, successful feedback should be timely, specific and process-focused. I would like to break down the example of how a school in the United States provides feedback using these three measures.

- **Timeliness:** In the US school that my children are attending, there are multiple low-stake assessments throughout the year.

These are marked and uploaded immediately, with short explanations of why marks were deducted. The combination of ongoing testing for learning gaps and access to real-time reports provides students and parents with a robust and objective system of knowing what actions are needed for improvement. A student may, for example, need help with content or submitting work on time.

- **Specificity:** An interim report is given to every student in the middle of the school trimester, containing a detailed analysis of the student's performance in each subject. It shares what the student has done well in and where he has fallen short. Unlike in Singapore, where the

report cards are for parents, the interim report is explained and given to students. Parents have access to it, but it is clear that the student owns it.

- **Focus on process:** British emeritus professor Dylan Wiliam explained that feedback should have a "process focus". When schools provide feedback on what students need to do to improve, it focuses on the task and how to go about it. Giving students clear strategies they can adopt to reach achievable goals ensures they have the opportunity to act on feedback as soon as they get it. This motivates and strengthens their belief in themselves.

Can feedback be delivered more effectively in Singapore schools?
Priscilla Ang (Ms)

SAF did it; time for schools to also modify uniforms

Ms Cindy Guo (Give children respect, privacy, Feb 11) and Ms Yong Su Lin (Redesign Nanyang Girls' High School uniform, Feb 18) called for certain schools to redesign their uniforms to make them more practical and comfortable.

With global temperatures rising, school uniforms that are double-, triple- or even quadruple-layered

should be phased out. Take the example of the pinafores worn by students of Raffles Girls' School and many convent girls' schools – part of uniforms designed decades ago. The pinafores themselves are pleated, and are hence triple-layered in most areas except at the top and on the sides. Beneath that, the girls are required to wear a blouse or polo T-shirt.

According to a report by Singapore's National Climate Change Secretariat, the annual mean temperature rose from 26.6 deg C in 1972 to 27.7 deg C in 2014. It warned of more occurrences of heat

stress and discomfort among the elderly and sick.

In the light of this, it would be negligent to ignore the plight of students made to wear numerous layers of clothing in what may be stuffy, non-air-conditioned classroom environments.

I applaud the Singapore Armed Forces for leading the way by introducing cooler combat uniforms, and I strongly urge the Ministry of Education to follow suit.

We should not wait for incidents of heat-related injury among students before we are galvanised into action.
Yew Woon Si (Dr)

Calls to relook design of uniform unnecessary

The thrust of the discussion over the recent incident at Nanyang Girls' High School (NYGH) has changed somewhat since it first started (Redesign Nanyang Girls'

High School uniform, by Ms Yong Su Lin, Feb 18).

The controversy stemmed not from the school's rule on light-coloured bras per se, but the manner in which it was enforced.

Hence, redress should be in the form of ensuring that future checks are conducted in a more sensitive manner.

Some of the issues raised with respect to the school uniform appear

unwarranted. For instance, the colour and material used for the NYGH uniform are not unique to the school.

With regard to comfort, it has to be balanced with the purpose that uniform is meant to serve. Few would argue that home clothes are the most comfortable attire, yet we do not show up for school or work in those.

In terms of functionality, the

Dual roles a conflict of interest

Regarding the issues raised by Mr Cheng Shoon Tat in his letter, I wonder how far the Hyflux board was able to raise concerns about the issue of retail bonds, given that the chairman of the board is also the group's chief executive (How much did Hyflux board know when it okayed retail bonds?, Feb 19).

This dual role is a clear conflict of interest. Management staff and the CEO should be separated from the board of directors.

This dual role of CEO and board chairman can also be seen at companies such as Venture Corporation.

Similarly, Best World's executive director is also the company's chief operating officer.

The chairman of the board should be the chief representative of the company's shareholders. The CEO, on the other hand, should be the leader of the company's managers.

Combining the two roles creates an inherent conflict of interest.

The board's main job is to evaluate and compensate management, including the CEO, based on performance.

It is difficult for the board to perform this critical function when its chairman is also the CEO.

Separating these roles can lead to better oversight and management, as an independent chairman is able to ensure that the board is fully engaged with strategy, and can evaluate how well that strategy is being implemented by management.

It also signals to shareholders that the CEO is accountable to the board.

A CEO-chairman is basically reporting to himself. The Singapore Institute of Directors' code of practice allows a company to appoint an independent non-executive director to be the lead independent director when the chairman and the CEO is the same person or related by close family ties, or are both part of the executive management team.

The authorities should close this loophole, which allows for a conflict of interest. There is no need to appoint more independent directors just because the CEO is also the chairman of the board.
Cheng Choon Fei

Review age criterion for aged person scheme

It was announced last year that from this April, to qualify under the aged person scheme for a monthly concessionary levy rate to hire a foreign domestic worker, the person must be at least 67 years old, up from the 65 years today.

It is hard to understand why this change was made.

When one turns 60, one can enjoy benefits such as transport concessions and grocery shopping discounts.

Many elderly people under the age of 67 without disabilities may still require help with household chores.

I hope the authorities will review this age criterion and revise the qualifying age to 65 or younger.

For some, engaging a maid is a necessity, not a luxury.
Kumar Pillay Thangavala

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Bouquets

Good to hear positive stories of maids, employers

I applaud the Association of Employment Agencies for organising the annual ceremony to honour foreign domestic workers and their employers (Long-service award for 19 pairs of maids, employers, Feb 12).

More often than not, all we read are negative reports on employer-maid relations, and it is difficult to single out which party is at fault when problems crop up.

Hence, it is a welcome change to hear stories of caring employers as well as responsible domestic helpers, especially those who have worked with an employer for many years.
Jeffrey Law Lee Beng

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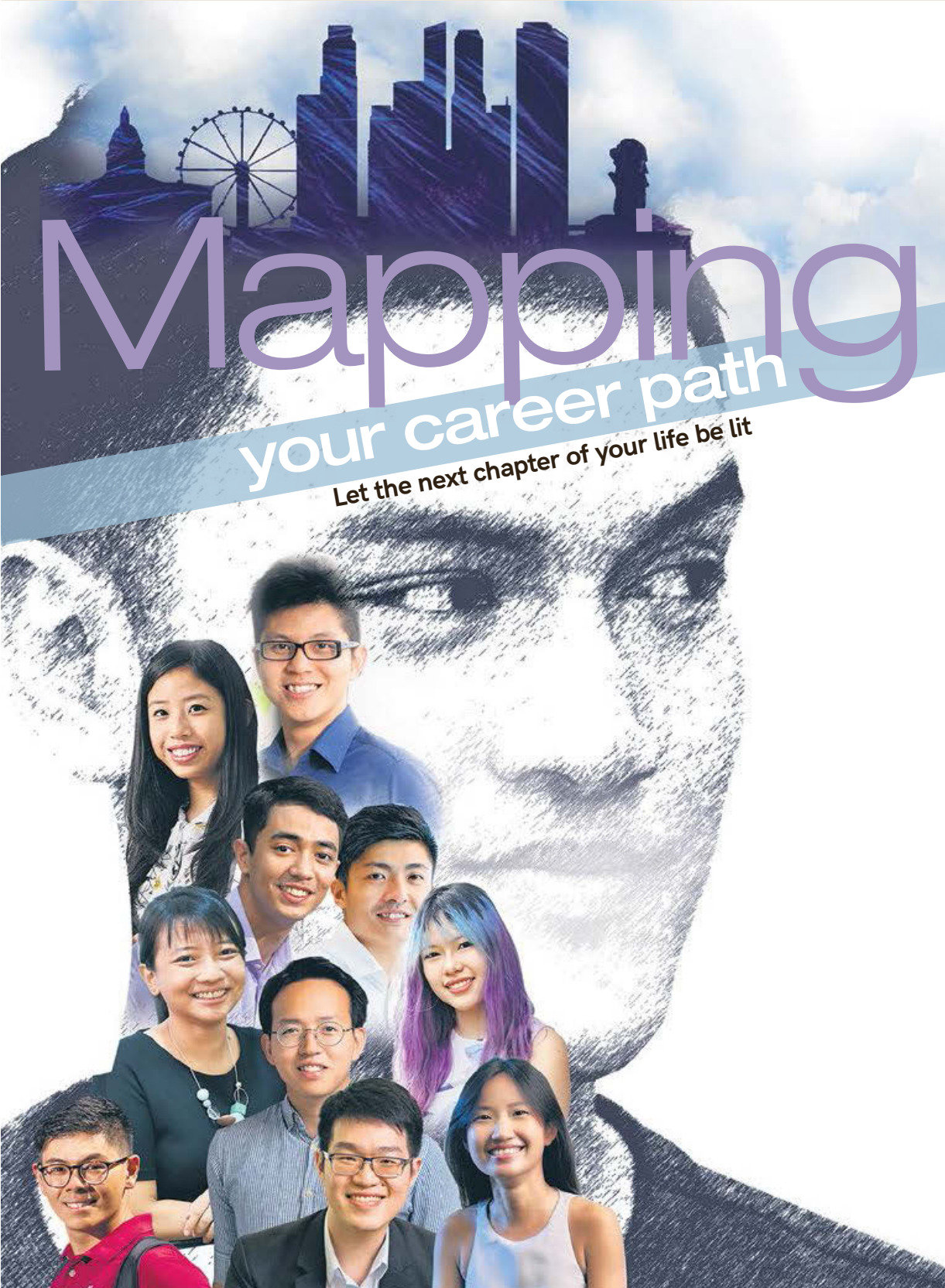
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Working to help freelance instructors upgrade skills

Plans under way to develop competency frameworks to help freelancers widen business prospects, get right skills

Ng Jun Sen
Business Correspondent

Encouraging freelance coaches and instructors to improve their skills looks like a sound game plan, but it is not so easy to carry out, as table tennis coach Toby Cheong knows all too well.

Mr Cheong, 40, attends classes to upgrade his coaching capabilities, but each day that he does not train students is a day of potential income lost for him and his family.

He is not alone. The cost of skills training as well as the loss of wages are key reasons why the 5,000 freelance instructors here have little incentive to upskill, said the National Instructors and Coaches Association (Nica) yesterday.

Unlike salaried employees, freelancers and contract workers such as Mr Cheong, who has taught table tennis for 15 years, get little support from employers for skills training.

“The school does not care; we are not part of the staff and are here only for a few months. If I want to upgrade my skills, I have to pay for the courses myself and attend them on my own time,” said Mr Cheong.

At first glance, this does not seem to be a big deal as many schools and private-sector clients do not have strict skill requirements for sport coaches or art and music instructors. Schools are the biggest employers of coaches and instructors.

But Mr Adrian Chiang, pro tem committee president of Nica, said this will be a problem when the business environment transforms and the onus to keep up with changes falls solely on the freelancer.

Nica is addressing this by working with the labour movement and industry stakeholders to develop skills competency frameworks for each occupation, such as fitness trainers, music teachers, sport coaches and art instructors.

They also want to certify experi-

enced freelancers and devise industry benchmarks so that service buyers, such as schools, know how skilled a freelancer actually is.

The aim is to allow freelancers to widen their business prospects and be equipped with the right skills.

Mr Chiang, who is a band instructor, said that while the hourly rates of freelance coaches and teachers have gone up slightly over the years in line with inflation, the actual demand has been falling.

“It is not just for my own situation, but across the board. Schools are reducing the number of training hours for their respective co-curricular activities, and that translates to lower wages for coaches and instructors from each client,” he told a briefing yesterday.

The appearance of “fly-by-night” trainers, who compete for contracts through price and not their actual skills, has lowered the overall appeal of the freelance industry and sent competent and experienced coaches out of the sector altogether.

Mr Ang Hin Kee, assistant director-general of the National Trades Union Congress and director of its

Freelancers and Self-Employed Unit, said recent mergers of schools and junior colleges have also reduced the number of assignments available.

“The challenge (for freelancers) is therefore to find other clients to fill those gaps,” added Mr Ang, an MP for Ang Mo Kio GRC.

“There are two prongs to this: One, how to find more clients for the same vocation; and two, whether there are other skills that freelancers can acquire...to deliver other services and have multiple revenue streams.”

Mr Ang will urge the Government to support skills training for freelancers in the upcoming debate on the ministries’ budgets.

Such support could be in the form of subsidised training fees, and clearer contractual terms to ensure that those with certified skills are recognised and priced accordingly.

There are around 200,000 of such workers in the growing gig economy here, which makes up about a tenth of Singapore’s workforce.

ngjunsen@sph.com.sg

LITTLE SUPPORT

The school does not care; we are not part of the staff and are here only for a few months. If I want to upgrade my skills, I have to pay for the courses myself and attend them on my own time.

TABLE TENNIS COACH TOBY CHEONG, on the lack of employer support for training.

TWO-PRONGED CHALLENGE

The challenge (for freelancers) is therefore to find other clients to fill those gaps. There are two prongs to this: One, how to find more clients for the same vocation; and two, whether there are other skills that freelancers can acquire...to deliver other services and have multiple revenue streams.

MR ANG HIN KEE, assistant director-general of the National Trades Union Congress and director of its Freelancers and Self-Employed Unit. He is also an MP for Ang Mo Kio GRC.



CapitaLand acquired Shanghai’s tallest twin towers (left) through a 50:50 joint venture between GIC and Raffles City China Investment Partners III fund. The firm’s significant acquisitions in developed markets outside Singapore last year included the Gallileo (right), a Grade A office building in Frankfurt, Germany. Rental revenue from newly acquired or operational properties in Singapore, China, Germany and the US contributed to a surge in revenue for CapitaLand. PHOTOS: CAPITALAND

Don’t expect quick rebound in private home prices: CapitaLand

Private home prices in Singapore are unlikely to stage a rapid rebound after the Government imposed further property curbs in mid-2018, the finance chief of the country’s largest developer said.

“If we see a 5 per cent increase in home prices, I think that will be a pretty good year for the Singapore residential market,” CapitaLand chief financial officer Andrew Lim said in an interview with Bloomberg Television yesterday.

“The severity and extent of the measures in July caught us by surprise,” he added.

Private home prices posted their first decline in six quarters in the last three months of last year.

In July, the Government imposed higher stamp duties and tougher loan-to-value rules to choke off a sudden bout of exuberance.

The earlier resurgence had been marked by aggressive land bids from developers and an explosion in collective sales, where apartment owners band together to sell entire buildings.

“We agree with the main view on the street, which is that we don’t expect a big bump up any time soon,” Mr Lim said.

CapitaLand’s profit rose 71.2 per cent to \$475.7 million in the quarter ended Dec 31, up from \$277.8 million last year, it said yesterday.

The higher earnings were also un-

derpinned by greater contributions from residential projects in China, as well as newly acquired and operational properties, CapitaLand said.

The developer agreed last month to acquire Temasek units Ascendas and Singbridge, bolstering its assets to more than \$116 billion across 180 cities in 32 countries. The deal

AT A GLANCE

REVENUE: \$5.6 billion (+21.3%)
NET PROFIT: \$1.76 billion (+12.3%)
DIVIDEND PER SHARE: 12 cents

adds logistics centres and business parks to its portfolio of residential, retail and commercial property.

President and group chief executive Lee Chee Koon said: “The transaction will strengthen our presence and pipeline in our core markets – Singapore and China. It will give us immediate scale in new economy sectors such as logistics and business parks, and in growth markets such as India, the US and Europe.”

On a per share basis, earnings came in at 11.4 cents for the quarter, up from 6.5 cents a year earlier.

Revenue climbed 34 per cent to \$1.62 billion, up from \$1.21 billion for the year-ago period. This was mainly due to higher handover of

units from residential projects in China and Vietnam, as well as rental revenue from newly acquired or operational properties in Singapore, China, Germany and the United States.

Residential projects that contributed to the revenue this quarter were Vermont Hills in Beijing, New Horizon in Shanghai, and Century Park East in Chengdu, as well as Sky Habitat and The Interlace here.

The two core markets of Singapore and China accounted for 75.9 per cent of the group’s revenue, up from 74.5 per cent for the year-ago quarter.

The board is proposing a dividend of 12 cents a share for finan-

cial year 2018, unchanged from the previous financial year.

Full-year net profit was up 12.3 per cent to \$1.76 billion, as revenue rose 21.3 per cent to \$5.6 billion.

This translated to earnings per share of 42.1 cents for the 12 months ended Dec 31, up from 37 cents in the preceding year.

The group said having a “diversified asset base with strong operating expertise” has allowed it to navigate macroeconomic uncertainties that affected market and business sentiments in FY2018.

Shares of CapitaLand closed yesterday at \$3.43 apiece, up four cents, or 1.18 per cent.

BLOOMBERG, THE BUSINESS TIMES

Local start-up Haulio's system links clients, companies and drivers on a single interface

Lester Wong

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MR ALVIN EA, Haulio's chief executive and co-founder.

The world's top two economies are holding talks to settle their dispute. Tariffs on US\$200 billion (\$270 billion) worth of Chinese imports are scheduled to rise to 25 per cent from 10 per cent by March 1 if there is no deal, although US President Donald Trump has suggested that he is open to pushing the deadline. REUTERS



Sembcorp Marine sank into the red last year with a net loss of \$74.1 million, contrasting with its strong performance the year before. The company expects overall business volume and activity to remain relatively low amid tight competition and oversupply. PHOTO: SEMBCORP MARINE

AT A GLANCE

REVENUE: \$913.2 million (+0.2%)

NET PROFIT: \$5.9 million (- 94.9%)

ability to absorb overheads.

Earnings per share dropped to 0.28 cent, down 95 per cent from 5.61 cents previously.

SembMarine shares closed up 6.33 per cent at \$1.68 yesterday following the results announcement.

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(Contact No: 92560071, 92560072)

9878 2372

Tender Closing Date:
1 March 2019, Friday, at 3pm

CBRE
Agency License No.: L3007333E

The results translate to earnings

29%

Fall in Great Eastern's full-year net profit to \$740.7 million.

Great Eastern shares closed down 0.75 per cent to \$26.46 yesterday.

Vehicles sitting at Nagoya Port in Nagoya, Aichi prefecture, earlier this month. Imports of Japanese cars make up about two-thirds of Japan's US\$69 billion annual trade surplus with the US, making Tokyo a target of criticism by US President Donald Trump. PHOTO: BLOOMBERG



Japan's exports fall most in over two years in January

Shipments to Asia weaken amid slowing global demand and US-China trade frictions

17.4%

Fall in Japanese exports to China, Japan's biggest trading partner, in the year to January.

TOKYO • Japan's exports posted their biggest decline in more than two years last month, adding to concerns about slowing global demand and trade frictions as business confidence softens and orders for the country's machinery goods fell sharply.

Ministry of Finance data out yesterday showed Japan's exports fell 8.4 per cent in the year to January, versus a 5.5 per cent annual drop ex-

pected by economists in a Reuters poll. It was the sharpest annual decline since October 2016, and followed a revised 3.9 per cent year-on-year drop last December.

The data came after a key gauge of Japanese capital spending showed overseas orders for machinery fell the most in more than a decade in December, and business sentiment soured to a two-year low, as trade friction hampered global supply chain demand.

Global trade has slowed as Washington and Beijing have been locked in a tit-for-tat tariff battle for months, which could have rip-

ple effects on Japan's export-focused economy.

US President Donald Trump said on Tuesday that trade talks with China in Washington this week were progressing well and suggested he was open to pushing off the deadline to finish negotiations.

Japanese exports to China, Japan's biggest trading partner, fell 17.4 per cent in the year to January.

Slowing shipments ahead of Chinese New Year holidays likely helped cool China-bound exports, Finance Ministry officials said. Japan's shipments to Asia, which account for more than half of overall

exports, fell 13.1 per cent last month.

US-bound exports rose 6.8 per cent in the year to January, led by shipments of cars. Japan's imports from the US rose 7.7 per cent in the year to January, led by crude oil.

Japan's trade surplus with the US rose 5.1 per cent to 367.4 billion yen (\$4.5 billion). It was the first increase in seven months.

The United States Commerce Department sent a report on Sunday to President Trump that could unleash steep tariffs on imported cars and auto parts.

Imports of Japanese cars make up about two-thirds of Japan's US\$69 billion annual trade surplus with the US, making Tokyo as well as Beijing a target of criticism by Mr Trump.

Last month, US-bound auto shipments grew 23.2 per cent to 139,579 units, the trade data showed.

Japan's overall imports fell 0.6 per cent from a year earlier, a smaller decline than the median estimate for a 2.8 per cent decrease.

The trade balance came to a deficit of 1.4152 trillion yen, versus a 1.011 trillion yen shortfall seen by economists. REUTERS

Huawei launches cloud services in S'pore

Chinese tech giant Huawei has launched its cloud services business here, with plans to make it among its largest outside China.

Huawei Cloud will build artificial intelligence (AI) capabilities in Singapore to serve start-ups and key industries in the region.

The firm will also extend 24/7 technical support and service assurance to cloud customers in the Government, Internet and financial industries, and large local enterprises, once it obtains approvals under Singapore's data security certification process.

Mr Jeffery Liu, president of Huawei South Pacific region, said Huawei Cloud will launch a skills training and recruitment plan for the Asia-Pacific to provide more opportunities for employment and professional development.

"We are ready to help local governments and enterprises implement their digital transformation strategies through exciting new technologies such as cloud computing and AI," he added.

Huawei Cloud opened in Hong Kong, Russia, Thailand and South Africa last year, in addition to China, Europe and Latin America.

DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

We are ready to help local governments and enterprises implement their digital transformation strategies through exciting new technologies such as cloud computing and AI.



MR JEFFERY LIU, president of Huawei South Pacific region.



Key insights into market trends and investment opportunities



DR TAN KHEE GIAP
Co-Director, Asia Competitiveness Institute, Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, National University of Singapore & Chairman, Singapore National Committee for Pacific Economic Cooperation

Confronting new development in global trade; leading ASEAN to expedite economic reforms; staging national unity to harness potential; strengthening core competence to seek breakthrough



US/China Macroeconomic and FOREX Analysis

The speaker will provide insights into the current macroeconomic situation between US and China; illustrate the fundamentals to analyse the USD and RMB market; and examine the current and future outlook of those currencies.

DR LI WENLONG
Senior Economist
ASEAN+3 Macro Economic Research Office (AMRO)



Our Favourite Stocks and ETFs That Are Primed to Outperform

We take a closer look at some of the sectors and companies in the stock market that have been overlooked in 2018, but nonetheless have what it takes to outperform in 2019.

MR YOU WEIREN
Senior Analyst, Stocks & ETFs Research
FSMOne.com



Singapore Real Estate Market: Emerging Trends and Outlook in 2019

Despite the uncertain external environment, Singapore real estate remains appealing to investors and end-users. The speaker will share the outlook and emerging trends of various market segments.

DR LEE NAI JIA
Senior Director & Head Research
Knight Frank Pte Ltd

LIANHE ZAOBAO ECONOMIC OUTLOOK & INVESTMENT SEMINAR 2019

16 March 2019 (Saturday)

12 noon to 5pm

Capitol Theatre,

17 Stamford Rd, Singapore 178907
(Connected to City Hall MRT)

Fee: **\$25** nett per person
(inclusive of refreshment and goodie bag)

Seminar will be conducted in Mandarin

The year-long US-China trade war has sent the market on a rollercoaster ride. The US stock market turned bearish last year and has since pared the losses. On the home front, the Straits Times Index fluctuated between 3000 and 3200. In the face of market volatility, how should investors map out their game plan? Do we stay defensive to weather the heightened volatility? Or is it time to capitalise on the opportunities?

The latest round of cooling measures introduced last July has impacted the property market. How will this affect the investment potential of local private homes?

Lianhe Zaobao Economic Outlook & Investment Seminar 2019 has invited a panel of experts to share with you updates on economic and market trends in Singapore and across the globe as well as the investment outlook of stocks, currencies and real estate, and more.

To register (with credit card payment), please visit zbinvest2019.sphevents.com.sg

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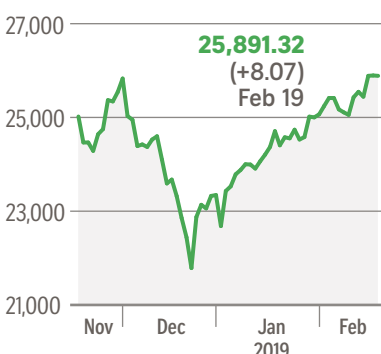
Shanghai Comp



Nikkei 225



Dow Jones



BullsAndBears

STI reverses Tuesday's losses with 0.6% gain

Only five of 30 STI constituents end in the red, but they include DBS

Lynette Tan

Local shares showed some life yesterday after a tepid start to the week, although there was not much to write home about in the end.

The extra buzz about the place allowed the Straits Times Index (STI) to reverse Tuesday's losses with a gain of 0.57 per cent, or 18.58 points, to 3,278.38.

There were 1.35 billion shares worth \$1.12 billion traded, with gainers trumping losers 249 to 167.

Only five of the 30 STI constituents ended in the red but they included DBS, which fell 0.08 per cent to \$25.08.

News broke yesterday morning that the bank is revamping its retail stock-brokerage operations and exploring alternative models to its broking arm, DBS Vickers.

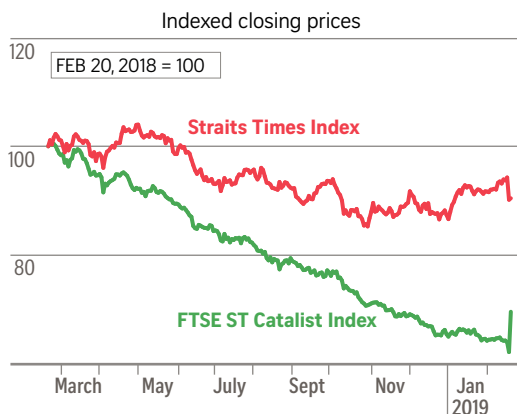
It is believed a townhall meeting has been called amid rumours that DBS plans to move good performers into wealth management and drop non-performing remisiers.

DBS had earlier reported fourth-quarter results, which missed some forecasts, with analysts cutting their target prices for the counter.

Other decliners yesterday included Creative Technology, which fell 0.82 per cent to \$4.81, despite having been "blessed" by Finance Minister Heng Swee Keat, in

Straits Times Index

Feb 20, 2019
3,278.38 ↑
+18.58 (+0.57%)
Current streak
1 day
Day high
3,285.60
Day low
3,266.89
52-week high
3,615.28 (May 2, 2018)
52-week low
2,966.45 (Oct 30, 2018)



FTSE ST Catalyst Index

Feb 20, 2019
298.96 ↓
-1.45 (-0.48%)
Current streak
1 day
Day high
301.59
Day low
298.84
52-week high
469.26 (Feb 21, 2018)
52-week low
298.96 (Feb 20, 2019)

Indexed closing prices

FEB 20, 2018 = 100



FTSE ST All-Share Index

Feb 20, 2019
794.07 ↑
+4.60 (+0.58%)
Current streak
1 day
Day high
795.24
Day low
791.47
52-week high
868.02 (April 30, 2018)
52-week low
722.91 (Oct 30, 2018)

trader's words. But that bit of gloom did not dampen spirits, especially for Sembcorp Marine.

The counter surged 6.33 per cent to \$1.68 and was the day's fifth-most active stock by traded value.

This came despite the offshore en-

gineering group's sharp drop in fourth-quarter earnings, as analysts and traders said the results beat their expectations.

DBS analyst Yeo Kee Yan also highlighted the fact that oil prices have risen in the past three weeks,

which should help Sembcorp Marine's stock price.

Indeed, pricier crude appeared to lift optimism on energy-related firms. Aside from SembMarine, Sembcorp Industries and Keppel Corp also traded up.

Sembcorp Industries added 3.5 per cent to \$2.66, while Keppel Corp closed up 3.27 per cent at \$6.32.

On the property front, CapitaLand rose as much as 1.5 per cent after reporting a 71.2 per cent surge in fourth-quarter profit and declaring a dividend of 12 cents a share.

The counter finished 1.18 per cent higher at \$3.43. Sasseur Reit added 4.05 per cent to 77 cents after fourth-quarter distribution per unit beat forecasts a day earlier.

Elsewhere, markets across Asia generally closed higher as well, after US President Donald Trump signalled flexibility around the crucial trade truce deadline of March 1.

tanlyn@sph.com.sg

Straits Times Index stocks

52-WEEK HIGH	52-WEEK LOW	COMPANY	CURRENCY LAST TRADED SALE	+OR-	'VOL '000	GROSS YIELD%	P/BV
280	245	Ascendas Reit	277	-1	13983	5.8	1.4
192	161	CapitaCom Trust	189	+1	10404	4.6	1
380	298	Capitaland	343	+4	8945	3.5	0.8
245	196	CapitalMall Trust	244	+3	12087	4.7	1.2
1359	780	CityDev	953	+8	1938	1.9	0.9
251	196	ComfortDelGro	243 cd	unch	6873	4.3	2
3128	2265	DBS Grp	2508 cd	-2	3509	4.8	1.4
994	767	DairyFarm USD	US900	+3	234	2.3	-
133	85.5	Genting Sing	110	+1	24973	3.2	1.7
37	22.5	Golden Agri-Res	26	+0.5	12071	3.1	0.6
37	22.5	HPH Trust USD	US24 cd	unch	4103	1.1	0.4
744	588	HongkongLand USD	US715	+6	1352	2.8	0.3
7120	1099	JMH USD	US7085	-19	235	2.3	0.8
4078	3155	JSH USD	US3992	+25	198	0.8	0.5
3820	2766	Jardine C&C	3655	+29	369	3.1	1.8
835	567	Keppel Corp	632 cd	+20	7212	4.7	1
1404	1036	OCBC Bank	1167	+3	4755	3.2	1.2
564	455	SATS	514	+4	1583	3.5	3.6
786	672	SGX	786	+9	2516	3.8	9.8
1184	914	SIA	1002	+19	2377	4	1
292	231	SPH	249	+2	4700	5.2	1.1
378	321	ST Engineering	377	+4	3215	4	5.5
341	243	Sembcorp Ind	266	+9	8426	1.9	0.7
358	283	Singtel	305	+5	22032	6.7	1.7
88	57.5	ThaiBev	79	-0.5	20603	0.8	3.9
3037	2380	UOB	2598	+18	2235	3.8	1.3
898	591	UOL	1616	+10	1540	2.6	0.6
2965	1320	Venture Corp	1616	+5	1523	3.7	2.1
339	297	Wilmar Intl	335	-2	4181	3	1
154	84	YZJ Shipbldg SGD	142	+3	24423	3.2	1

FTSE ST Large & Mid-Cap Index stocks

52-WEEK HIGH	52-WEEK LOW	COMPANY	CURRENCY LAST TRADED SALE	+OR-	'VOL '000	GROSS YIELD%	P/BV
280	245	Ascendas Reit	277	-1	13983	5.8	1.4
120	105	Ascott Reit	114	+1	3616	6.3	1
74.5	59	Bumitama Agri	69	+0.5	138	1.1	1.6
178	143	CDL HTrust	160	+3	1832	-	1
192	161	CapitaCom Trust	189	+1	10404	4.6	1
380	298	Capitaland	343	+4	8945	3.5	0.8
245	196	CapitalMall Trust	244	+3	12087	4.7	1.2
164	133	CapitalMall China Tr	145	+1	1251	7	0.9
1359	780	CityDev	953	+8	1938	1.9	0.9
251	196	ComfortDelGro	243 cd	unch	6873	4.3	2
3128	2265	DBS Grp	2508 cd	-2	3509	4.8	1.4
994	767	DairyFarm USD	US900	+3	234	2.3	-
73.5	59	Far East HTrust	64.5 xd	-1	1536	-	0.7
183	150	First Resources	169	-3	1506	4	2.2
232	212	Fraser's Cpt Tr	231	+1	2150	5.2	11.1
114	101	Fraser's L&I Tr	111	-1	13684	6.2	1.2
133	85.5	Genting Sing	110	+1	24973	3.2	1.7
37	22.5	Golden Agri-Res	26	+0.5	12071	3.1	0.6
224	167	GuocoLand Ltd	186	+1	74	3.8	0.6
37	23	HPH Trust USD	US24 xd	unch	4103	1.1	0.4
744	588	HongkongLand USD	US715	+6	1352	2.8	0.3
7120	1099	JMH USD	US7085	-19	235	2.3	0.8
4078	3155	JSH USD	US3992	+25	198	0.8	0.5
3820	2766	Jardine C&C	3655	+29	369	3.1	1.8
58	44.5	Keppel Infra Tr	50.5	+0.5	3393	7.4	1.8
835	567	Keppel Corp	632 cd	+20	7212	4.7	1
124	108	Keppel Reit	124	+1	5137	4.5	0.9
1404	1036	OCBC Bank	1167	+3	4755	3.2	1.2
273	170	Man Oriental USD	US207	-1	102	1.4	1.5
186	152	Mapletree Com Tr	178	unch	5353	5.1	1.2
206	184	Mapletree Ind Tr	198	-1	4433	5.9	1.3
140	118	Mapletree Log Tr	139	+3	20086	5.5	1.2
128	107	Mapletree NAC Tr	125	+1	5250	6	0.9
83	73	NetLink NBN Tr	79.5	-0.5	4374	-	1
198	136	OCBC Bank	1167	+3	4755	3.2	1.2
87	64.5	OUH HTrust	72	+0.5	1189	-	1
250	157	Olam Intl	193	unch	1089	3.9	1
59	28	Oxley	33.5	+0.5	4949	4.5	1
287	256	ParkwayLife Reit	279	unch	717	4.6	1.5
121	98	Raffles Medical	111	-1	1229	2	2.6
564	455	SATS	514	+4	1583	3.5	3.6
786	672	SGX	786	+9	2516	3.8	9.8
1184	914	SIA	1002	+19	2377	4	1
336	220	SIA Engineering	236	+2	599	5.5	1.8
292	231	SPH	249	+2	4700	5.2	1.1
103	98	SPHREIT	101	-1	197	5.5	1.1
378	321	ST Engineering	377	+4	3215	4	5.5
341	243	Sembcorp Ind	266	+9	8426	1.9	0.7
266	149	Sembcorp Marine	168	+10	33104	1.2	1.5
57.5	39	Silverlake Axis	55 cd	+1.5	4530	5.5	8
142	88.5	SingPost	102	+4.5	11230	3.4	1.4
358	283	Singtel	305	+5	22032	6.7	1.7
258	158	StarHub	163	-1	4052	9.8	5.1
73.5	63.5	StarhillGbl Reit	70.5	+0.5	1669	6.5	0.8
199	163	Suntree Reit	192	+1	5251	5.2	0.9
88	57.5	ThaiBev	79	-0.5	20603	0.8	3.9
10.2	3.7	Thomson Medical	8	+0.1	14636	-	2.9
3037	2380	UOB	2598	+18	2235	3.8	1.3
898	591	UOL	1616	+10	1540	2.6	0.6
2965	1320	Venture Corp	1616	+5	1523	3.7	2.1
339	297	Wilmar Intl	335	-2	4181	3	1
226	183	Wing Tai	204	unch	335	3.9	0.5
154	84	YZJ Shipbldg SGD	142	+3	24423	3.2	1
182	116	Yanlord Land	142	+3	1517	4.8	0.6

FTSE ST Small-Cap Index stocks

52-WEEK HIGH	52-WEEK LOW	COMPANY	LAST SALE	+OR-	'VOL '000	GROSS YIELD%	P/BV
145	129	AIMSAMP Cap Reit	139	+1	136	7.4	1
68.5	48	Accordia Golf Tr	58	+1	679	6.6	0.7
86.5	74	Ascendas-hTrust	86	+0.5	436	-	0.9
119	99	Ascendas-iTrust	113	+1	1302	5.4	1.3
58	12.2	Asian Pay TV Tr	13.2	-0.2	1050	49.2	0.2
64	48	Banyan Tree	60	+1	935	1.7	0.8
333	115	Best World	271	halt	-	1.5	9.7
85.5	76	Boustead	81	unch	142	3.7	1.2
126	79.5	BreadTalk	88 cd	unch	212	1.7	3
632	521	Bukit Sembawang	569	unch	46	3.2	1.1
85.5	65.5	Cache Log Trust	72	+0.5	2594	8.2	1.1
52	39.5	Centurion	41.5	+1	248	6	0.8
166	104	China Aviation	129	+4	814	3.5	1.1
46	29.5	China Everbright	35	+1	5564	14	0.7
165	90.5	China Sunshine	132	+4	1292	2.3	1.5
103	64	Chip Eng Seng	70	+0.5	1590	5.7	0.6
53.5	31.5	Cosco	35.5	+0.5	4991	-	1.5
700	302	Delong	572	-1	7	-	0.6
27.5	17.5	Duty Free Intl	19.9	+0.4	289	9.3	1.3
77	67.5	EC World Reit	74.5	unch	322	8.1	0.9
59	47	ESR-REIT	53	unch	2752	7.3	1.1
140	92	First Reit	106	+1	443	8.1	1
152	135	Fraser's Com Tr	149	+1	650	6.4	1
79.5	66.5	Fraser's HTrust	73.5	+0.5	725	-	1
25.5	16.4	Geo Energy Res	18.8	+0.2	450	5.3	1.1
91	70.5	HRnetGroup	78	-0.5	547	2.9	2.4
67.5	52	Health Mgt Intl	55.5xd	-0.5	7	0.6	5.3
279	73	Hi-P Intl	99.5	+1	4231	25.1	1.5
283	252	Hong Leong Fin	272	+2	92	4.8	0.7
80.5	71	IREIT Global	76.5	unch	76	7.8	1.1
37	18.3	Indofood Agri	21	-0.5	627	-	0.2
84	43	Japfa	83	+2	5414	0.6	1.6
76.5	49	KSH	52	-0.5	61	4.2	0.9
85	53	Kep-KBS Reit USD	66.5	+1	750	9.4	0.6
149	128	Keppel DC Reit	146	unch	3596	5	1.4
190	132	Keppel T&T	189	+1	15	-	1.2
119	7	KrisEnergy	8	+0.3	6629	-	1
70	44.5	Lian Beng	49.5	+0.5	122	4.5	0.4
40.5	18	Lippo Malls Tr	23.5	-0.5	3506	14.6	0.9
53	26	MM2 Asia	27	unch	2074	-	1.5
95	69.5	ManulifeReit USD	84	unch	531	6.6	0.7
120	95	Metro	99	-1	221	5.1	0.6
19.4	5	Noble	81	susp	-	-	-
63.4	45	QUE Com Reit	50	+0.5	1447	7	0.7
65	54	PEC	57	-	-	3.5	0.6
39.5	17	POSH	18.9	+0.6	157	-	0.6
64.5	44.5	Q&M Dental	48	+1	234	3.4	3.4
110	55.5	QAF Ltd	69.5	+0.5	75	7.2	0.8
124	96	Riverstone	113	unch	31	2	3.7
54.5	22	SIIC Environment	36	+0.5	275	-	0.6
45	38.5	Sabana Reit	43	+0.5	1901	7.4	0.8
119	92	Sheng Siong	109	+1	1263	3	6
25.5	3.3	Sino Grandness	61	+0.2	2532	-	0.1
69	56	SoilbuildBizReit	60	unch	370	8.8	-
129	80.5	TianjinZX USD	90	-0.5	343	-	0.7
46	32.5	Tuan Sing	38.5cd	unch	156	2.3	0.4
136	54	UMS	67.5	+0.5	2396	7.4	1.6
112	58.5	Valuetronics	68.5	+0.5	5307	6.7	1.5
15	8.3	Ying Li Intl	12.3	+0.1	3327	-	0.3
48.5	24	Yoma Strategic	33.5	unch	1855	0.7	0.9
33	16.1	Yongnam	17.4	+0.1	568	-	0.3

The move by the Monetary Authority of Singapore and its EU counterpart to work on a common approach to derivatives trading obligations was billed as part of an effort to deepen bilateral economic ties, add liquidity to previously fragmented markets, and help businesses better hedge currency risks. ST FILE PHOTO



MAS, EC working on common approach to derivatives trading

Move will let trading venues on both sides support G-20 reforms

Singapore and European firms could still be able to use derivatives platforms in either market to trade in products such as interest rate and credit default derivatives despite ongoing global reforms. The Monetary Authority of Singapore (MAS) and its European Union counterpart are joining forces on a common approach that will let trading venues on both sides support derivatives reforms by the Group of 20 (G-20) bloc. The move was billed as part of an effort to deepen economic ties between Singapore and the EU, add liquidity to previously fragmented

markets, and help businesses better hedge currency risks. The trading obligation – which requires over-the-counter derivatives to change hands in regulated markets – will cover interest rate swaps in currencies such as the greenback, euro and pound. The MAS said in February last year that it planned to require the trading of over-the-counter derivatives on organised markets, completing its implementation of G-20 derivatives reforms. The EU is a G-20 member, but Singapore is not. The MAS also said at the time that it would seek equivalence determinations from the United States and EU for exchanges and other centralised trading facilities here. Now, in a quid pro quo arrangement, the Singapore central bank

wants to exempt EU multilateral trading facilities and organised trading facilities from having to be approved exchanges or recognised market operators under the Securities and Futures Act. But the planned mutual recognition will not take place overnight. The EU member-state authorities must first vote in favour of the draft decision in the European Securities Committee, before an equivalence determination recognises approved Singapore-based markets as eligible platforms. The list of eligible trading venues on both sides could be tweaked, based on market changes, the MAS and European Commission (EC) said in a joint statement yesterday. Mr Valdis Dombrovskis, who heads the EU's Financial Stability,

Financial Services and Capital Markets Union, said: "European firms will be able to continue trading interest rate and credit default derivatives on Singapore's platforms, and engaging with local counterparts in Asia. Singaporean firms will also be able to use EU platforms." Deputy Prime Minister Tharman Shanmugaratnam, who is also MAS chairman, added in the statement: "With the mutual recognition of each other's trading platforms, EU and Singapore businesses will be able to hedge risks across our derivatives markets more efficiently." The derivatives decision comes a week after the European Parliament agreed to a free trade deal and an investment protection agreement with Singapore. The trade deal will likely take effect this year.

Company Briefs

PropNex Realty

PropNex Realty has entered into a strategic collaboration with Global Alliance Property (GAP), which is a wholly owned indirect subsidiary of China Real Estate Grp (CREG). Under the collaboration, salespersons from GAP will be transferred to PropNex. Meanwhile, GAP – which operates under the Century 21 franchise – will discontinue its real estate agency business, while Catalyst-listed CREG will continue to forge ahead with real estate development in China. The agency "stands to capture close to half of the residential market share and provide greater strength in marketing major projects through its wider outreach to consumers", PropNex said in a press statement. PropNex, which is Singapore's biggest listed real estate agency, has over 7,500 salespersons currently. Chief executive Ismail Gafoor said the real estate agency will start to engage salespersons from GAP from today.

BreadTalk

Food and beverage (F&B) chain BreadTalk has bought out its partner in a joint venture in Thailand, acquiring the remaining 50 per cent interest in the company that it does not own from the Minor Food Group (MFG) for 160 million baht (\$\$7 million), it said yesterday. The joint venture with MFG, BTM Thailand, was set up in 2014, with BTM appointed the BreadTalk franchisee in Thailand to operate BreadTalk outlets in the country, and look into future expansion. BreadTalk said in 2014 that the "strategic partnership" was meant to further develop the BreadTalk brand in Thailand, tapping MFG's established track record of operating F&B outlets in Thailand. MFG also operates the ThaiExpress and Xin Wang Hong Kong Cafe chains.

CHA Healthcare Singapore

CHA Healthcare Singapore has entered into a share purchase agreement to invest \$50 million in Catalyst-listed Singapore Medical Group (SMG), increasing its stake from 6.86 per cent to 24.13 per cent, SMG announced in a filing to the Singapore Exchange yesterday. CHA, an international subsidiary of Korean healthcare group CHA Health Systems, has agreed to purchase 83 million vendor shares at 60.5 cents apiece, or a premium of 34.5 per cent to SMG's closing price of 44.98 cents on Tuesday. Upon completion of the share purchase within three months of the agreement date, CHA will become SMG's controlling shareholder. It is also extending a convertible loan of \$10 million to SMG, which will result in the issue of 23.6 million new shares if converted in full.

AI start-up ViSenze raises \$27m in Series C funding

A start-up that sells artificial intelligence (AI) technology to boost e-commerce has raised US\$20 million (\$\$27 million) in Series C funding. The financing for ViSenze was led by venture capital firm Gobi Partners and venture investor Sonae IM. Other participants included new investors Tembusu ICT Fund and 3i Ventures Global Innovation Fund, and existing investors such as Rakuten Ventures, Singapore Press Holdings Ventures and UOB Venture Management. Gobi Partners focuses on innovative technology companies in China, Hong Kong and South-east Asia. Sonae IM is a European-based investor specialising in retail and telco tech as well as cyber security. Founded in 2012, ViSenze sells AI technology to consumer brands so

online shoppers can replace key-word-based product searches with digital images, effectively driving recommendations with image data. Its proprietary image recognition technology allows products to be searched through features such as style and occasion, or visual attributes like colours and patterns. The technology is used by major brands for visual trend analytics, social insights, price discovery and competitive strategising. ViSenze said its solutions have linked over 400 million products from more than 800 merchants on its global affiliate network. Its clients include Rakuten, ASOS, Urban Outfitters and Zalora. The latest funding round will enable ViSenze to further invest in tie-ups with smartphone makers, as

well as consumer and social communication applications. Its partners include Samsung, LG and Huawei. ViSenze reported an annual revenue growth rate of over 200 per cent. Its headcount has tripled over the past three years to about 80, with offices in Singapore, China, Britain, the United States, South Korea and Japan. Gobi Partners managing director Dan Chong said on Tuesday: "The e-commerce markets across the world continue to expand and shoppers are becoming more mobile-centric. "As ViSenze helps its clients to capture this group of consumers and adapt to their shopping behaviour, the opportunity to scale its business significantly presents itself." Sonae IM chief executive Eduardo Piedade said: "With more retailers and brands offering visual search capabilities... to accelerate the time to purchase and improve the buying experience, we see the technology continuing to shape the future of retail." ViSenze raised US\$10.5 million in 2016. Its funding now totals US\$34.5 million.

SINGAPORE BUDGET 2019

Reits sector gets big boost from lifting of sunset clause on tax exemption

Extension of other tax perks also cheered, but some say Budget moves may not be enough to draw trust and Reit listings, especially from aircraft leasing sector

Today in **THE BUSINESS TIMES**
A publication of **sph**

Interbank currency rates

Currencies	Against \$	Feb 20	Against US\$	Feb 20
	Bid	Offer	Bid	Offer
US\$/US\$ to one unit of foreign currency:				
Australian dollar	0.9688	0.9693	0.7164	0.7165
Canadian dollar	1.0254	1.0262	0.7586	0.7583
Euro	1.5335	1.5346	1.1340	1.1344
NZ dollar	0.9282	0.9288	0.6864	0.6866
Sterling pound	1.7639	1.7651	1.3044	1.3048
US dollar	1.3523	1.3528	-	-
\$/US\$ to 100 units of foreign currency:				
Chinese renminbi	20.1094	20.1199	14.8706	14.8728
Danish kroner	20.5532	20.5640	15.1987	15.2010
Hong Kong dollar	17.23	17.24	12.7402	12.7403
Indian Rupee	190	190	14.037	14.043
Indonesian rupiah	0.0096	0.0096	0.0071	0.0071
Japanese yen	1284	1284	0.9017	0.9018
Korean won	0.1204	0.1204	0.0890	0.0890
Malaysian ringgit	33.21	33.25	24.5580	24.5621
New Taiwan dollar	4.3893	4.3924	3.2458	3.2469
Norwegian krone	15.7734	15.7884	11.6641	11.6709
Philippine peso	25.971	25.990	19.205	19.212
Saudi riyal	36.0575	36.0718	26.6638	26.6645
Swedish krona	14.5341	14.5458	10.7477	10.7523
Swiss franc	135.0275	135.1314	99.8502	99.8901
Thai Baht	4.3482	4.3540	3.2154	3.2185

MSCI INDICES

Feb 19	Index	In local curr % chg	% chg
		Index	% chg
World Preliminary	1587.7	0.1	10.1
EAFE Preliminary	1091.5	-0.1	8.3
Europe Preliminary	1524.5	-0.3	8.5
Australia	1224.3	0.3	7.3
Austria Preliminary	550.4	0.0	10.5
Belgium Preliminary	1019.2	-0.7	11.4
Canada Preliminary	2037.7	0.7	11.3
Denmark Preliminary	8081.6	-0.9	9.1
Finland Preliminary	721.7	-1.3	10.5
France Preliminary	1863.9	-0.2	8.8
Germany Preliminary	903.1	0.1	7.0
Greece Preliminary	46.9	-0.8	8.1
India	1225.8	-0.5	-2.9
Indonesia	7268.4	-0.4	2.7
Ireland Preliminary	196.7	-0.1	9.8
Israel Preliminary	256.3	0.2	11.1
Italy Preliminary	685.2	-0.4	10.1
Japan	960.6	0.3	7.5
Korea	660.2	-0.4	9.3
Malaysia	591.7	0.8	1.7
Netherlands Preliminary	1636.5	-0.4	12.2
New Zealand	140.1	-0.4	5.6
Norway Preliminary	2980.6	0.0	7.0
Pakistan	401.1	-0.6	12.4
Philippines	1326.5	-1.2	5.1
Portugal Preliminary	87.4	0.1	8.2
Singapore	1688.9	-0.2	5.9
Singapore Free	363.1	-0.2	5.9

Government securities

Period	Issue code	Coupon rate (%)	Maturity	Close Bid	High	Day's Low
2-Year	NY05100N	3.250%	01-Sep-20	101.96	101.96	101.96
5-Year	N519100A	2.000%	01-Feb-24	100.11	100.12	100.12
10-Year	NX18100A	2.625%	01-May-28	104.17	104.20	104.20
15-Year	NZ13100X	3.375%	01-Sep-33	112.48	112.60	112.60
20-Year	NZ16100X	2.250%	01-Aug-36	97.76	97.93	97.80
30-Year	NA16100H	2.750%	01-Mar-46	103.76	104.25	103.85

Note: Based on latest issue

Source: Monetary Authority of Singapore



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NOTICES

OBITUARIES

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Arun Narula

1950 - 2019

Chairman of Mercantile Pacific Group

Has peacefully left for his heavenly abode on the 17th February, 2019.

His love, affection, leadership, dedication and positivity, remain an inspiration to us all.

We strive to follow his unrelenting path

Greatly respected and missed by his family and the Mercantile family around the world.

Wife: Madam Kanchan Narula

Sons & Daughters in law: Karan-Dimple & Kunal-Divya

Grandchildren: Kyra, Kiann, Viraaj, Vihaan, Riaan

Brothers & Sisters in law: Pradip-Seema, Sharad-Neena

You are welcomed to pay your last respects at
8A Joan Road S298895

Visitation:

Thursday, 21st February 6pm – 8pm

Friday, 22nd February 10am – 2pm

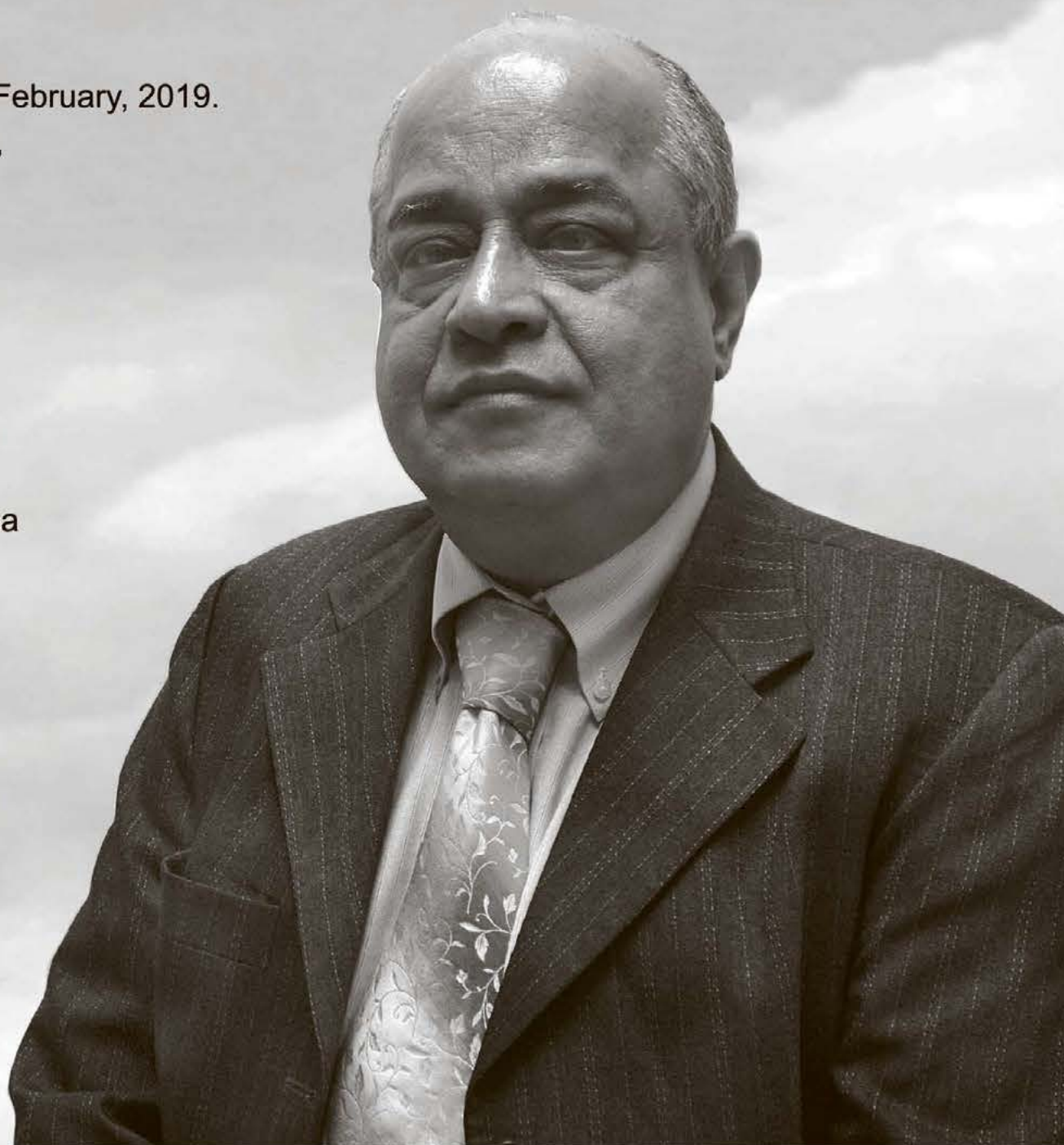
Cortege leaves on Friday, 22nd February 2019
at 3pm for Mandai Crematorium, Hall 1, 5pm.

Celebration of Life Memorial Service

Saturday, 23rd February 2019

4 – 6pm

at 8A Joan Road S298895



Our dearly beloved father



Samadi

Age: 85

Was called home to the Lord on 19 February 2019.
Dearly missed and fondly remembered by loved ones.

Wife: Hastuti (deceased)

Sons:

Sasmita Samadi
Purwitadji Samadi
Samiadji Samadi

Daughters:

Hestiningsih Samadi
Lim Siok Tin

Grandsons:

William Samadi
Logan Samadi

Daughters-in-law:

Susan Tanuwijaya
Lin Mei-Yen
Donna Chia

Son-in-law:

Lim Yean Teng

Granddaughters:

Ailice Samadi
Jodie Samadi
Priscilla Samadi
Natalie Samadi
Erin Samadi

All relatives and friends.

Wake at Singapore Casket Level 2, Regency Hall,
131 Lavender Street, Singapore 338737
from Friday 22 February 2019, 10.00am onwards.
Church service on Friday 22 February 2019 at 8.00pm.
Cortege leaves on Saturday 23 February 2019 at 9.20am
to Mandai Crematorium Hall 3 for cremation at 10.20am.

"The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly,
along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus."
1 Timothy 1:14



Tan Su See

Age: 102

Was called home to be with the Lord on 20 February 2019.
Dearly missed and fondly remembered by loved ones.

Husband: Dennis Yong Woo Diong (deceased)

Children:

Peng Cheng
Mabel
Simon
Michelle

Grandchildren:

Avon
Adeline
Alvin
Kenneth
Samuel
Noel
Selina
Marianne
Alisabeth

Spouses:

San Nam Leong
Charlie Ho
Annie Ling
Anthony Loh

Spouses:

Cecelia Leong
Dilip Karmakar
Tina Leong
Karissa Leong
Bessie Leong

John Lim

Great Grandchildren: Andrew, Abigail, Claire,
Matthew, Maya, Anna, Megan, Peter, Suzie,
Emily, Nathan, Kara, Sarah and Janelle

All relatives and friends.

Wake at Singapore Casket Level 3, Jade Hall,
131 Lavender Street, Singapore 338737 from
Thursday 21 February 2019, 2.00pm onwards.
Night service on Thursday 21 February 2019 at 8.00pm.
Cortege leaves on Friday 22 February 2019 for
Mandai Crematorium for cremation.
Details will be announced at the wake.

1st Anniversary
In Loving Memory of



Yuen Suet Yin Karen
Departed on 21 February 2018

God saw you getting tired when a cure was not to be.
So he wrapped his arms around you, and whispered,
"come unto me." You didn't deserve what you went
through, and so he gave you rest. So when I saw you
sleeping, so peaceful and free from pain. I could not
wish you to come back, to suffer that all again.

Dearly missed and fondly remembered by
husband, daughter, relatives and friends.

With Deepest Sympathy &
Heartfelt Condolences to
Emily Chan

on the demise of her beloved mother



MARIA MUN SWEE HEONG

on 18 February 2019

From:

Chairman & Board of Directors
Co-Founders, Staff & Volunteers
Children & Families of
Arc Children's Centre Co. Ltd

"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever." Psalm 23:6



Chan Lin Oi

Age: 83

Was called home peacefully to the Lord on 20 February 2019.
Dearly missed and fondly remembered by loved ones.

Husband: Yeo Kim Chua Thomas (deceased)

Sons:

Yeo Su Kiang Eddie
Yeo Su Chye Gerard
Yeo Su Tuck Clarence

Daughters-in-law:

Tan Gim Siew Irene
Corinna Ho Yoke Chun (deceased)
Cressida Thian Fong Lang

Grandchildren: Yeo Wei Hsiang Bryan, Yeo Xin Yi Lynnette,
Yeo Xin Hui Andrea and Yeo Jing Yi Germaine

And all relatives and friends.

Wake is held at Block 35A Chai Chee Avenue, Singapore 462035.

Night prayer will be held on Thursday 21 February 2019.
Service on Friday 22 February 2019 at 5.30pm, thereafter
to Mandai Crematorium Hall 3 for cremation at 7.30pm.

Om



Mr. Murugaian Gunasegaran (Thomas)
(Baker Hughes) (Founder – SMT Sri Periyachi Pillalgal)

Age: 62

Passed away peacefully in Tianjin, China, on 13 February 2019.
Dearly missed and fondly remembered by loved ones.

Wife: Mrs. R. Kandabai (Kandi)

Parents: Late Mr. Marutha Muthu Murugaian
& Late Mdm. Letchumi

Daughter & Son-in-law: Sivasakthiy & Sikander

Son & Daughter-in-law: Govarthan & Lavanya

Brothers, Sisters, Brothers-In-Law, Sisters-In-Law,
Nieces, Nephews, Grandchildren,

all relatives, friends and the SMT Periyachi Boys.

For wake and funeral details, please contact

Vijay: 8222 4704, Vicky: 9488 6959, Nidra: 9112 1915,

Andy: 9488 8586 or Ram: 9817 9555.

Om

Om Shanti



DHANGAVRI RASIKLAL JAMMADAS

Age: 85

passed away peacefully on 19 February 2019.
Dearly missed and fondly remembered by loved ones.

Husband: Rasiklal s/o Jammadas (Deceased)

Son:

Jaswantal s/o Rasiklal

Grandson:

Dev-Jay Jaswantal

Granddaughter:

Dr Henny Jaswantal

Great-grandchildren: Krishna & Keshava Rampal

Caregiver: Eni Kusriani

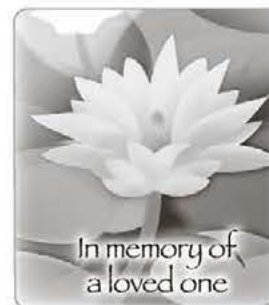
Besnu will be held on 21 February 2019 from 5-7pm

at 32 Jalan Rajah Function Room S(329141).

Om



In memory of
a loved one



In memory of
a loved one



Tan Kit Fong

Age: 84

Passed away peacefully on
20 February 2019. Dearly missed
and fondly remembered by
loved ones, relatives and friends.
Wake at Singapore Casket Level 5,
Silver Hall, 131 Lavender Street,
Singapore 338737.

Cortege leaves on Friday
22 February 2019 at 11.00am
for Kong Meng San Phor Kark See
Monastery for cremation at 12.00pm.

"In memoriam"
is for the loved
ones whom you
remember...



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1800-289-9988 or 6319-5192

OBITUARIES



CHIN PAN SEE @ SHI YING

Age: 80

Passed away peacefully at home on 20 February 2019.
Dearly missed by loved ones and fondly remembered for
his compassion towards others.

Wife: Kee Poh Wah

Son:
Chin Yik Ming

Daughter-in-law:
Gan La Chin

Daughter:
Chin Lu Huey

Son-in-law:
Zhang Tao

Grandsons:
Chin Siang Yang
Chin Guan Qun
Zhang Qifan

And all relatives and friends.

Wake is held at Singapore Funeral Parlour,
91 Tampines Link, Singapore 528746, Dahlia Room, Level 3.

Cortege will leave on Sunday, 24 February 2019 at 11am
for Mandai Crematorium Hall 4 for cremation at 12.05pm.

All donations will be donated to Charitable Organizations.



In Loving Memory Of



Tan Sri Khoo Teck Puat

Departed 21.02.2004

*A true measure of your worth includes
all the benefits others have gained
from your successes.*

Yet another year has passed and we still mourn your passing.
We will always cherish your memory and celebrate your spirit.

Deeply missed and lovingly remembered by your children,
grandchildren & great-grandchildren.

Share
the message of farewell
with loved ones & friends



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SPORT

It's a little bit hard because I feel like people are staring at me, and not like in a good way.

NAOMI OSAKA, reigning US Open and Australian Open champion, but a casualty at the Dubai Championships in her opening match. **C8**



Men's singles world champion Kento Momota of Japan has emerged stronger from his one-year ban for visiting an illegal casino. The world No. 1 is among the favourites to win the Singapore Open in April but faces strong competition from current and former Olympic champions Chen Long and Lin Dan. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

MOMOTA TO PLAY IN SINGAPORE OPEN

Men's world No. 1 among seven reigning world champions to play in April 9-14 event

David Lee

Seven of the eight reigning world champions will feature at the Singapore Open, as 2018 Badminton World Federation World Championships men's singles champion and world No. 1 Kento Momota becomes the latest superstar to con-

firm his participation for the April 9-14 event.

He will face strong competition at the Singapore Indoor Stadium with Olympic gold medallists Lin Dan and Chen Long also in the mix.

The 24-year-old made a remarkable comeback in 2017 and became the first Japanese man to top the world rankings, despite being sus-

pending for a year by the Nippon Badminton Association for visiting an illegal casino.

The 2015 Singapore Open men's singles champion told news website Firstpost: "I was immature and foolish. I was told by the Nippon Badminton Association secretary-general, Kinji Zeniya, that this sort of frequent gambling was punishable by law in Japan, with a prison sentence of up to three years."

"In view of my services to Japanese badminton, they were willing to refrain from pressing charges if I

4

- Reigning world champions in four events slated to compete in Spore:
- Men's singles (Momota, Japan)
 - Men's doubles (Li-Liu, China)
 - Women's doubles (Matsumoto-Nagahara, Jpn)
 - Mixed doubles (Zheng-Huang, Chn)

accepted a one-year ban from international badminton.

"I readily accepted the compromise solution, and felt I richly deserved it."

"That one year in the wilderness was the darkest period of my life, and I really missed the competition. But I resolved to keep practising and working out to stay fit; vowed that I would come back even stronger than before."

Momota is part of a 29-strong Japanese contingent heading to Singapore. This includes women's doubles world champions Mayu Matsumoto and Wakana Nagahara.

Earlier on, China had already announced their 35-player line-up, which includes men's doubles world champions Li Junhui and Liu Yuchen, and mixed doubles world champions Zheng Siwei and Huang Yaqiong.

The only reigning world champion who will not be here is Spain's women's singles winner Carolina Marin, who ruptured her right anterior cruciate ligament earlier this year.

The Singapore Open's star-studded field will also see last year's win-

ners returning to defend their titles.

These include men's and women's singles champions - Chinese Taipei's Chou Tien-chen and Japan's Sayaka Takahashi respectively - as well as Japan's women's doubles pairing Ayako Sakuramoto and Yukiko Takahata, and Malaysia's mixed doubles duo Goh Soon Huat and Shevon Jemie Lai.

Asian Games women's singles champion Tai Tzu-ying (Chinese Taipei) and Olympic women's singles silver medallist P.V. Sindhu (India) will also compete here.

Singapore Open 2019 organising committee spokesman Michael Foo said: "This year's line-up is one that badminton fans will not want to miss. From defending champs to world champs, it has all the makings of an action-packed week."

"Fans have slightly more than a week left to purchase their tickets at early-bird rates, so definitely don't let this opportunity slip."

davidlee@sph.com.sg

• Tickets are available via Sports Hub Tix and ApacTix.

WIN OCBC Cycle slots

OCBC Cycle, in partnership with The Straits Times, is offering ST readers a chance to win 3 pairs of slots to the May 11-12 OCBC Cycle.

To earn a chance of winning a pair of slots in either the 42km The Sportive Ride (\$99) or the 23km The Straits Times Ride (\$59), simply send us a photo of your unique bike together with a short caption (50 words or less) telling us what makes your bike special.



E-mail your photo and caption (subject header: OCBC Cycle 2019), together with your name, IC and contact number to participate@ocbccycle.com by 5pm, Monday (Feb 25).

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

- Slots are personal to the holder, and one other person nominated by the holder, and are strictly not transferable or exchangeable.
- By entering this contest, you agree to share data (including personal data) with organisers solely for the purposes of this contest.

- The judges' decision is final.
- Employees of OCBC Bank and Singapore Press Holdings are not eligible to enter this contest.
- Entry to the OCBC Cycle 2019 event is valid only on the date of that slot's category.

Leaving comfort zone for triathlon

Laura Chia

National water polo player Lee Kai Yang is used to competing in the water and having teammates spur him on in competitions.

But come Sunday, he will be competing on an unfamiliar surface in the Super League Triathlon at One*15 Marina on Sentosa.

He will be running in the Relay Enduro category, which involves a team of three people swimming 300m, cycling 4km and running 1.6km. The cycle is repeated with a change of competitor after each event.

The 24-year-old is in one of three teams comprising national athletes who are taking part in the Super League Triathlon this weekend.

Lee's teammates are two-time Olympian and two-time Asian Games swimming champion Tao Li and 2015 SEA Games netball gold medallist Charmaine Soh, who will be cycling.

The second team comprise Lee's

national teammate Yip Yang (cycle) as well as floorballers Tng Zhong Wei (swim) and Vignesa Pasupathy (run).

Said four-time SEA Games gold medallist Lee: "It's definitely going to be more interesting stepping out of our comfort zone and trying something new."

"The more exciting part is teaming up with other athletes like Tao Li and we're just going to do our best."

To train for the event, he runs an additional 10 minutes twice a week before his regular sessions at the gym.

While Lee still prefers training as part of a team, he said that his motivation to train for the triathlon comes from within.

"Running is a more self-motivated, individual sport and I'm still very pro-team sports. But I'm also curious to see how well I run because I don't normally run."

"So that alone is enough to motivate me to put in the time and train for it," he said.



Clockwise from left: Charmaine Soh, Lee Kai Yang and Tao Li will be taking part in Sunday's Relay Enduro. TNP FILE PHOTO

Tao, 29, hopes to encourage Singaporeans to have a multi-sport lifestyle.

"We want to promote what most Singaporeans can do and this is not competitive so anyone can do it."

"Sport is important because it keeps you fit and healthy and one sport is kind of boring so we should do many sports."

"Hopefully when people see us

do it, they will think it's fun and take part in it."

Minister for Culture, Community and Youth Grace Fu is running in a third team with synchronised swimmer Lee Mei Shuang (swim) and Sport Singapore foundation SportCares runner Thaslim Hajana-jubudeen (cycle).

claura@sph.com.sg

KLOPP OPTIMISTIC DESPITE DRAW

Liverpool boss hopes things will be better in return leg as Bayern deal with Kimmich loss

LONDON • While Jurgen Klopp's prediction of a "blockbuster" between two five-time champions of Europe proved misplaced, his warning about the enduring strength of old adversaries Bayern Munich did not.

Wise heads rather than old legs told for the German champions, who were disciplined and measured in their approach, as Liverpool were frustrated 0-0 at Anfield on Tuesday for the first time in this season's Champions League.

While the goal-less draw in the first leg of their last-16 Champions League tie was not "the result we dreamt of", the German remains confident of progressing to the quarter-finals when they travel to the Allianz Arena on March 13.

He told reporters: "It is not a game we will remember in 30 years (but) it's the result we have and we will work with that."

"In Germany, we say it is like the Homburger Shooting, a big ballyhoo before the game and then not

really a lot of things happen in the game. It was an intense one.

"But in the first half, we still had the chances. And, as it always is, a goal would have changed things."

"It was a clean sheet without the big man (Virgil van Dijk was suspended). A lot of people wouldn't have expected that. The defending was good. A lot of things were really good, I'm not over the moon but I'm completely OK with the game."

"Day by day, the result will feel better for us."

Although Liverpool posed plenty of problems at the other end, with Sadio Mane wasting their best chance, the final ball often lacked precision and Klopp admitted his

side "can play better".

The German added: "We made life more difficult with the last pass today about 10 or 12 times."

However, their lack of fluency had much to do with Bayern's defensive block and the Reds are expecting a similar challenge from Niko Kovac's men in Germany, with Klopp calling on his players "to show we are proper in the competition in three weeks".

Although Bayern have not hit the heights of previous years in the Bundesliga this season, trailing Borussia Dortmund by three points in their quest to land a seventh straight league title, the Bavarian giants are still canny opponents.

Coach Kovac was delighted at the way his team, who have made the last eight for the past seven terms, "as a whole kept everything tight at the back".

He said: "I can't remember that many clubs that have not conceded at Anfield. The way that Liverpool play, they are a sensationally good team."

"We didn't score but we didn't let one in. Home games are an advantage, we play in front of 75,000, but we know if we concede, we have to win."

But while Liverpool have lost all of their last five Champions League games away from Anfield, including last season's final, they will be

boosted by the return of van Dijk.

Also, Bayern will not be able to field defender Joshua Kimmich in the return leg after he picked up his third yellow card of the campaign.

Former Bayern midfielder Owen Hargreaves told BT Sport Kimmich's ban "could change everything".

He added: "It's a big loss. Rafinha, who is very trusted, will play but he doesn't give the attacking threat that Kimmich does."

"Arguably their best player over the past two seasons... they're going to need to score at home, and he's their greatest source of assists."

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE, THE GUARDIAN



Bayern Munich defender Joshua Kimmich (centre) fouling Liverpool striker Sadio Mane as Javi Martinez moves in for the ball during the first leg of their last-16 Champions League tie at Anfield on Tuesday. Kimmich was subsequently shown a yellow card, his third of the campaign, which will rule him out of the return leg on March 13.

PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

HUGE LOSS

It's a big loss. Rafinha, who is very trusted, will play but he doesn't give the attacking threat that Kimmich does. Arguably their best player over the past two seasons... they're going to need to score at home, and he's their greatest source of assists.

”

OWEN HARGREAVES, on the suspension of Bayern Munich defender Joshua Kimmich for the second leg.

Barca have to learn to hit the target: Valverde

LYON • Barcelona coach Ernesto Valverde let his players know in no uncertain terms their struggles in front of goal could cost them dear, admitting their 0-0 draw at Lyon in the first leg of their Champions League last-16 tie was a "dangerous result".

While the Spanish champions had the lion's share of possession on Tuesday, they were profligate with only five of 25 shots on target.

The home team, who were missing suspended captain Nabil Fekir, almost made them pay when Martin Terrier hit the bar early on.

Lionel Messi and his teammates were once again left frustrated on their travels and have now gone six away matches without winning in the knockout stages, scoring just a single goal in three years.

Luis Suarez's European form is of particular concern to Barcelona

fans – he has yet to open his account this season and again failed to net away from the Nou Camp – a drought that dates back to Sept 16, 2015.

But Valverde dismissed Suarez's critics, insisting he was not worried as the Uruguay international was still "generating scoring chances, which is what is asked of a striker".

He said: "Even if he doesn't have chances, he creates them for his

24

Hours Luis Suarez played without scoring an away goal for Barcelona in the Champions League, since he netted against Roma in 2015.

teammates. Opponents are frightened of him.

"Football is like that and strikers will have these streaks. The important thing is to have chances."

Defender Gerard Pique also backed his teammate to rediscover his touch in front of goal, claiming if "Suarez has shown one thing, it is that he has a lot of goals in him".

However, with Barcelona not at their flowing best after a run of four

draws in their past five matches, Valverde conceded "the tie is in the air" when Lyon arrive in Spain for the second leg on March 13.

The Spaniard added: "I don't think it's very easy to win away from home in the Champions League. We have absolutely dominated and they have not lost in this competition this season."

"We played good football, but you have to hit the target as well, and we didn't. We deserved a better result and did enough to win. It just wasn't our night. We are on the right road, though and... we will try to win it in front of our fans."

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE, THE GUARDIAN

Crowdfunding saves struggling Polish club

WARSAW • When a 112-year-old Polish football club with 13 national championship titles teetered dangerously close to bankruptcy, its fans stepped in with funding.

Wisla Krakow supporters became equity investors, saving their beloved team and boosting an emerging niche capital market in the process.

They drummed up 4 million zloty (\$51.4 million) between 9,129 investors who bought 40,000 shares in less than two days earlier this year, using the Beesfund crowdfunding platform.

The fast-track fundraising has attracted other sports teams to the platform, said Beesfund chief executive officer Arkadiusz Regiec.

The clubs are adding to Beesfund's roster of clients, which before Wisla's fan-led revival included restaurants, information technology start-ups and independent breweries typical of crowdfunding operators abroad.

Beesfund estimates it may help to raise as much as 80 million zloty this year, bolstered by demand from sports teams and in contrast to a persistent lull in initial public offerings on the Warsaw Stock Exchange.

"Crowdfunding should allow to us to escape this grim time we're experiencing in Poland's capital market," Regiec said in an e-mail.

"It's a chance for people to become shareholders in businesses they understand, without intermediaries. This seems to be attractive, even if we offer pretty high-risk investments." BLOOMBERG

Sarri eyes win streak to avoid Chelsea axe

LONDON • Maurizio Sarri insists he expects to avoid being sacked as Chelsea manager if his side can put together a sustained winning run.

Reports yesterday claimed Sarri will be axed if the Blues lose any of their next three matches.

Sarri faces a crucial seven days as Chelsea face Malmo in the second leg of their Europa League last-32 tie today, Manchester City in the League Cup final on Sunday and Tottenham in the Premier League next Wednesday.

Sarri said: "We need to win three,

four matches in a row. It's the only solution... There isn't another way. We can only have good performances and results."

The 2-0 FA Cup defeat to Manchester United followed the 6-0 thrashing at Manchester City.

Angry Blues fans have demanded the 60-year-old's sacking and started calling for former Chelsea star Frank Lampard to replace him.

But Sarri says he has not spoken to owner Roman Abramovich or influential director Marina Granovskaia this week.

He said: "I have to think that I will be the manager of Chelsea for a long time, otherwise I cannot work. I am not sure (if I will be here for long), but I have to think this."

"Of course in this moment it's very difficult to think we're able to win three, four matches in a row. As you know very well in football everything can change in one day."

But the Italian still refuses to compromise on his possession-based playing style, ridiculed by supporters on Monday.

"The system is a false problem. I

know very well that when we lose I have to put a striker on the pitch. When we win I have to put a defender on the pitch. But I want to see football in another way," he said.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

CHELSEA V MALMO
Singtel TV Ch110 & StarHub Ch214, tomorrow, 4am

Next 48 Hours

TODAY

BASKETBALL
ABL Macau Black Bears v HK Eastern (StarHub Ch202, 7.30pm).

FOOTBALL
Uefa Europa League Last 32, 2nd leg: Arsenal v Bate (Singtel TV Ch110 & StarHub Ch214), Villarreal v Sporting (Ch215), Valencia v Celtic (Ch112 & 213), Napoli v Zurich (Ch113) –

tomorrow, 1.50am. Betis v Rennes (Ch112 & Ch213), Chelsea v Malmo (Ch110 & Ch214), Inter v Rapid Vienna (Ch113 & Ch215) – tomorrow, 3.55am.

TENNIS
ATP Rio Open Day 4 (StarHub Ch201, tomorrow, 3.30am).

TOMORROW

BASKETBALL
ABL Malaysia Dragons v Singapore Slingers (StarHub Ch202, 8.30pm).

FOOTBALL
Spanish LaLiga Espanyol v Huesca (StarHub Ch213, Saturday, 3.55am).

TENNIS
ATP Rio Open Day 5 (StarHub Ch201, Saturday, 2am).

FOUR-DIGIT DRAW

Feb 20 2019

FIRST ♦ 5088
SECOND ♦ 4470
THIRD ♦ 1844

STARTERS

0940 0959 1072
2538 3379 3680
3921 5713 7283
8193

CONSOLATIONS

0752 3051 3516
5043 6864 6902
7725 7854 8344
9738

SPORT

SportsWorld

City Football Group buys Chinese club

LONDON • A group led by the owner of Premier League champions Manchester City has acquired a Chinese third-division team for an undisclosed fee.

City Football Group (CFG), along with partner Ubtech – a Shenzhen-based robotics firm – and sports investment fund China Sports Capital, announced it has bought Sichuan Jiuniu in a statement that was issued yesterday.

Sichuan becomes the seventh club under the ownership of the CFG, founded by the United Arab Emirates’ Sheikh Mansour Zayed al-Nahyan. BLOOMBERG

Madrid Open on Federer’s clay agenda

MADRID • Roger Federer’s return to clay will include an appearance at the Madrid Open for the first time since 2015.

For the last two years, the 37-year-old has chosen to skip the clay-court season completely to preserve energy for hard-court and grass tournaments.

But the Swiss legend indicated last month that he would play at the French Open this year and Madrid Open organisers yesterday announced the three-time winner would be in the field. AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Ex-NBA official to helm USA Gymnastics

LOS ANGELES • USA Gymnastics, fighting for its survival in the wake of the Larry Nassar sex abuse scandal, appointed former National Basketball Association (NBA) vice-president Li Li Leung as its president and chief executive officer on Tuesday.

Her duties at the NBA included working with USA Basketball, the sport’s national governing body.

Leung, who is the body’s fourth chief executive in 23 months, praised “the courage and strength” of the gymnasts who were victimised by Nassar, the former team doctor, and promised to “make it a priority to see that their claims are resolved”. AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

OSAKA LOATHES THE LIMELIGHT

Japanese ace loses first match as world No. 1, blames media attention on split with coach

DUBAI • A tearful Naomi Osaka pinned the blame for her first loss since becoming world No. 1 on the media glare that followed her shock split with coach Sascha Bajin last week.

Playing her first match since winning the Australian Open to usurp Romanian Simona Halep at the summit, the Japanese capitulated 6-3, 6-3 against France’s Kristina Mladenovic in her opening match at the Dubai Championships on Tuesday.

The 21-year-old won fewer than half of her first-serve points, making 25 unforced errors and revealed in her post-match interview the upset was “the result of that (parting of ways)”.

She said: “I’m pretty sure as time goes on, you guys will stop talking about it.

“For now, it’s like the biggest tennis news, I guess.

“See, it’s a little bit hard because I feel like people are staring at me, and not in a good way.”

The hard-hitting Osaka has become one of the sport’s most bankable players since winning at Flushing Meadows before following up with her second Major victory at Rod Laver Arena under Bajin’s tutelage, but has always spoken of feeling uncomfortable in the spotlight.

Wiping away tears, she spoke of the challenge of adjusting to her new celebrity status, adding: “I don’t think I necessarily understand what position I’m in, in a way.

“And because last year, I wasn’t even anywhere close to this ranking and people didn’t pay attention to me, and that’s something that I’m comfortable with.

“I don’t know why I’m crying. I



Naomi Osaka won fewer than half of her first-serve points and made 25 unforced errors in the loss to Kristina Mladenovic at the Dubai Championships on Tuesday. PHOTO: EPA-EFE

don’t know why this is happening. I don’t really like the attention, so yeah, it’s been a little tough.”

Yesterday, Osaka’s conqueror Mladenovic was beaten 7-5, 7-5 by Spain’s Carla Suarez Navarro in the last 16.

But, former title holders Petra Kvitova and Halep battled through the brisk desert winds to advance into the quarter-finals.

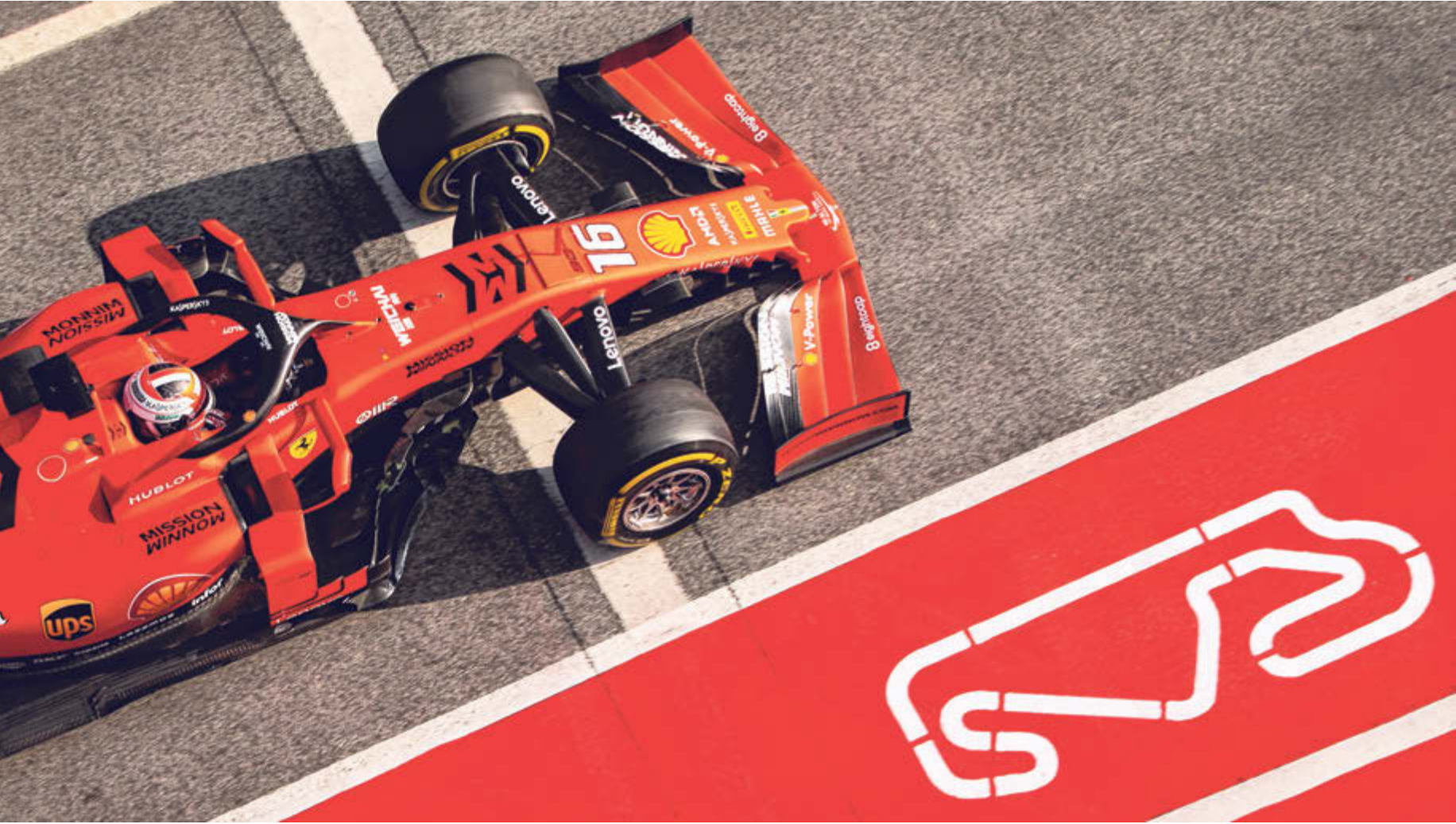
Second seed Kvitova outlasted American qualifier Jennifer Brady 7-5, 1-6, 6-3, while crowd favourite and third seed Halep, supported by scores of chanting fans, beat Lesia

Tsurenko of Ukraine 6-3, 7-5, breaking her seven times from 10 chances.

Kvitova, who won the event in 2013, admitted that she “wasn’t really that prepared for this tournament”.

The Czech said: “When I came here, I didn’t really have many days of practice, to be honest. I had something different to do in my life.

“But I’m happy I was able to get two wins. It’s great when you’re not playing your best and you still find a way to win.” REUTERS



Ferrari driver Charles Leclerc of Monaco has no problems settling in with his new team on Day 2 of pre-season testing in Barcelona. He produced a best time of 1min 18.247sec and did 157 laps to keep pace with teammate Sebastian Vettel, who was also fastest on Day 1 (1:18.161, 169 laps). PHOTO: EPA-EFE

Hamilton wary of Ferrari’s strong start in testing

BARCELONA • While critics point to Mercedes’ five-year dominance of Formula One as the reason why they remain favourites to retain their drivers’ and constructors’ championship titles, Ferrari’s form in pre-season testing has given Lewis Hamilton cause for concern.

The five-time world champion told BBC Sport yesterday that “it ap-

pears it’s going to be even more of a challenge for us this year”.

He added: “Ferrari are very, very strong right now, as you’ve seen.”

His optimism has been kept in check by Ferrari’s new recruit Charles Leclerc, who kept the Scuderia on top of the timesheets, and did more laps than any other driver on the second day of F1’s pre-sea-

son testing in Spain on Tuesday.

After teammate Sebastian Vettel led the way on Monday with the fastest time (1min 18.161sec) and most laps (169), Leclerc slotted in seamlessly with a time not far off.

He produced a best time of 1:18.247 and did 157 laps at the Circuit de Catalunya in Barcelona.

“I quickly felt comfortable with

the SF90 and I have to say I really enjoyed myself,” said the 21-year-old. “Let’s hope we keep going like this over the next few days.”

Hamilton, working through the Mercedes testing programme, did one more lap than Leclerc in the morning stint before handing over to teammate Valtteri Bottas.

Between them, the Mercedes drivers covered 163 laps – the most by any team on Tuesday – without their times standing out from the crowd as the champions focused on set-up and long-run reliability.

“We were focusing on working through our run plan and we got through everything we wanted,” said Hamilton, who ended up 10th-fastest with a time of 1:19.928.

“It’s good that we’re getting in a lot of mileage and we will try to increase that over the next days as we continue to discover the characteristics of this car.” REUTERS

Commentary

Fairness is ambiguous in Semenya’s case

SPORTS FIXTURES HIGHLIGHTS				
Event	Home	Away	Timing	Venue
Fri, 22 Feb 2019				
UE Europe	Napoli	Zurich	1.55am	LW*
UE Europe	Villarreal	Sporting	1.55am	LW*
UE Europe	Valencia	Glasgow Celtic	1.55am	LW*
UE Europe	Arsenal	BATE Borisov	1.55am	LW*
UE Europe	Real Betis	Rennes	4.00am	LW*
UE Europe	Inter	Rapid Vienna	4.00am	LW*
UE Europe	Chelsea	Malmo	4.00am	LW*

LW* - Telecast not available at Livewire(Singapore Pools)
Visit singaporepools.com for the latest 'Live' telecast listing.

LOTTERY

TOTO

Fri, 22 Feb 2019, 9.30pm Draw No. 3451/2019

Group 1 Prize **\$13,600,000** est.

Draw Venue: Singapore Pools (Private) Limited, 210 Middle Road, #01-01, Singapore 188994

No person under the age of 18 years shall be allowed to purchase a ticket or to claim any prize.
LW: Livewire (MBS) & Livewire (RWS) (21 years and above)
Livewire (Singapore Pools) (21 years and above during 'Live' telecast)
SB: Sportsbuzz@rcs (21 years and above)
Singapore Pools Account Service. Call 6788 6688 for more details.

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Matthew Syed

I cannot get morally outraged about the case of Caster Semenya. I do not see it as a glaring injustice that she might be excluded from female events because of high levels of testosterone.

However, I also would not see it as a particular injustice to her competitors if she were allowed to compete with her testosterone off the scales.

It is not that I fail to understand the emotions involved, or do not recognise her rivals will probably never win a race in their lives if she wins her appeal against a regulation restricting testosterone levels in female runners at the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) in Lausanne.

It is not that I cannot empathise with the South African Olympic and world 800m champion over the humiliation she endured in the original crass handling of her case

by the International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF).

The problem is that the word “fairness” is somewhat misplaced.

When the anti-Semenya brigade say it is “unfair” that she is allowed to compete with unusually high levels of testosterone, or her supporters say that it is “unfair” for her to be excluded, I tend to think they are both wrong.

This is one of many cases where the concept of fairness is incomputable.

This can be seen in quite a trivial way, simply by asking the IAAF the grounds for wanting to set the upper limit for testosterone at five nanomoles per litre.

Isn’t that a nice, round number? It is certainly one that should make us suspicious. Note that this excludes any woman with a naturally occurring level of 5.1, with or without a “differences of sexual development condition”.

There is no non-arbitrary way to set upper bounds, lower bounds, or any bounds for that matter.

There are multiple ways of determining gender itself, with criteria involving chromosomes, biology and genitalia. Humans can be endlessly classified and reclassified.

Most people point to the extreme cases to justify their boundaries, but this is merely begging the question. There are women with XX chromosomes, who have testosterone levels in the top 1 per cent of their gender, and there are women with XY who do not.

There are men with XY, who have testosterone in the bottom 1 per cent of their gender, and those who have testosterone levels lower than some women.

There are multiple ways of determining gender itself, with criteria involving chromosomes, biology and genitalia. Humans can be endlessly classified and reclassified.

The rules of basketball discriminate against short people (regardless of testosterone), as the height of the hoop is arbitrary.

The fact that terms such as “fairness” are being used by sincere people on polar ends of the Semenya debate should help us to see that the concept is being deployed by different people in different ways.

As so often in debate, people are disagreeing because of unspecified premises.

I do not envy the decision of the CAS, and will struggle to criticise them, whichever way they ultimately come down. I also think that a mature society should accept the inherent ambiguity in some moral judgments.

Yet, perhaps there is one thing we can agree on. I have been troubled by much of the coverage of Semenya – the way she has been ghoulishly discussed.

At times, it has felt as if the 28-year-old has been turned into the freak act at a circus.

Whichever way the case goes, I hope that this kind of coverage will cease. That we will regard her with admiration rather than pity. That we will salute her courage rather than gossip about her genitalia.

Sport may not be able to eliminate arbitrary factors from its classifications, but that should never justify a lack of humanity towards its competitors. Semenya is, and will always remain, a great athlete. THE TIMES, LONDON

life

D **EPIC FAIL**
One-star review for
Matthew McConaughey
and Anne Hathaway film
D5

I always enjoy going to a hawker centre with my family. To bump into my neighbours doing their daily marketing and catch up with them over breakfast is a delightful experience.

Victoria Mak, 30

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Singapore's Hawker Culture at
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KARL LAGERFELD 1933-2019



Karl Lagerfeld at the Fall/Winter 2006/2007 ready-to-wear Chanel collection in Paris. The designer reinvented the iconic brand which was struggling after the death of founder Coco Chanel. PHOTO: REUTERS

Gordon Ng

German designer – nay, global celebrity and pop-culture icon – Karl Lagerfeld died in Paris on Tuesday aged 85. Where to begin for a man whose long life and prolific career are the stuff of legend?

The news first came as a shock – Lagerfeld was the kind of character you imagine immortal. He was the institution, as far as fashion was concerned.

Lagerfeld is best known today for his work at the House of Chanel. The Wertheimer brothers who own the company hired the designer in 1983 to resuscitate its ailing business.

Following the death of its namesake founder Coco Chanel, the brand had been struggling for relevance and needed an irreverent jolt of life. That gamble by the Wertheimers clearly paid off.

The Chanel we imagine today is an entirely modern creation by Lagerfeld, who for 36 years reinvented and subverted the vast lexicon of the iconic brand. He once described Chanel as an “old hat” that stank of old-fashioned bourgeois tastes, but gave it currency and contemporary life so it regained its status as one of the most important and venerated names in fashion – a position it had lost for a while.

Before Chanel, however, Lagerfeld was a creative gun for hire. His first job in fashion was with Pierre Balmain and he quickly became an apprentice to the couturier. There, he learnt old-world dressmaking methods from the 1920s and 1930s.

His next appointment was at Jean Patou, where he designed haute couture for the upper crust of French society. The stuffiness of the clientele and styles quickly bored Lagerfeld, who left to freelance for a host of French and Italian brands such as Chloe, Krizia and Mario Valentino.

In 1966, he was made the main designer for Chloe and worked for more than 20 years.

That all pales compared to his

END OF AN ERA

The incomparable iconoclast, whose career spanned more than seven decades in fashion, leaves behind a powerful legacy

time at Fendi: a total of 54 years, since starting in 1965.

The Italian fur house, led by Silvia Venturini Fendi, embraced Lagerfeld's irreverent approach to the expensive fabric. Shaving, painting, dyeing and reimagining its uses in maverick ways, he revived and crafted a fashionable identity out of Fendi, as he did at Chanel.

Lagerfeld belongs very much to what we now call the old guard of fashion. That is, the generation of designers whose careers skyrocketed in the 1970s and 1980s and were formally trained in the tradition of haute-couture dressmaking.

Consider this: Lagerfeld won the International Wool Secretariat – the prestigious award today renamed the Woolmark Prize – at the age of 21 for the coat category. That same year, Yves Saint Laurent won for dress design.

The two would go on to develop an infamous rivalry. While Saint Laurent was an emotional and often self-destructive creative force couched in the archetype of an

artist's melodrama, Lagerfeld worked relentlessly, famously declaring himself averse to drink, drugs and cigarettes – the vices of Saint Laurent.

Pierre Berge, Saint Laurent's long-time life and business partner, decried Lagerfeld, saying he “is not a designer, he's a mercenary”.

This healthy loathing was mutual. On Berge's death in 2017, Lagerfeld's florist called, according to an interview given to Numero Magazine, to ask if they ought to send a cactus to the funeral.

But with Lagerfeld gone, fashion can now truly say that it is an end of an era. The industry of haute couture had its heyday in the 1950s and was continued in spirit by the ilk of Lagerfeld, Saint Laurent and Valentino. It was an era of designers who were also dressmakers – who had the technical know-how as well as expansive creative wells. Today, the leaders of the industry are more likely creative directors who simply curate image and branding.

No small feat, but a far cry from

the couturiers of yore – of which Lagerfeld was certainly the last. Valentino retired about 10 years ago.

For instance, in the 2009 documentary Valentino: The Last Emperor, Lagerfeld was seen backstage after Valentino Garavani's final runway show. During a congratulatory embrace, he whispers conspiratorially to Garavani: “Compared to us, the rest are making rags.” Hubris, of course, but perhaps not far from the truth.

He also – though perhaps unconsciously and quite ironically – became a prototype for the modern fashion designer. The rock-star status of these creatives can be traced to Lagerfeld's embrace of fame and personal branding. In 2004, he was the first to collaborate on a limited-edition collection with mass retailer H&M, birthing an unstoppable wave of designer collaborations that has continued since.

Today, skate brands and heritage luxury houses hawk see-through suitcases and thousand-dollar cellphone cases. The fact is these collab-

orations owe their existences to Lagerfeld's initial bridging (or democratising) of high fashion for the masses.

Today, designers are also routinely swapped around at big-name brands for continuous infusions of newness. This idea, borrowed from Lagerfeld's revival of Chanel, saw houses in the 1990s such as Gucci (by Tom Ford), Louis Vuitton (by Marc Jacobs), Givenchy (by Alexander McQueen), Lanvin (by Alber Elbaz) and Dior (by John Galliano) hire fresh young talents to bring newness to brands riding on a famous old name.

Today, even older names from the annals of fashion such as Schiaparelli, Poiret and Vionnet are being dragged out of their graves. Invariably, that too is a path Lagerfeld carved for the rest of the industry.

There is almost too much to say because any description of Lagerfeld draws its own competing duality. His resistance to technology such as e-mail and cellphones, for instance, is compounded by the

countless iPods he keeps for music to work to. The meanness of his most scandalous comments is tempered by countless stories of generosity by his friends and colleagues. He disregards his past work to strive for newness, all the while outfitting himself in the same uniform of Dior suits, high-collared Hilditch & Key shirts, fingerless gloves and sunglasses.

He designs some of the most desirable, cherished and coveted things for women, yet sells his own multi-million-dollar collections of art and furniture with neither sentimentality nor material attachment.

He is an international celebrity, yet puts up a public identity so absurdly idiosyncratic he almost becomes his own caricature.

In a profile by New York Magazine in 2006, he had this to say about his work: “Marc Jacobs and all, they will have to wait. This is not an easy job because I have the understanding about Chanel and couture design that nobody has anymore. I have the training that nobody else has. This job is not free.”

It feels only fair to talk about Lagerfeld's work in relation to his life, him having likened it to breathing. His lifetime contracts with Chanel and Fendi provided him the leeway to work, as he preferred, to his death. He was an ardent modernist who looked to the next and the new with endless projects including photography and a publishing imprint with Steidl.

And work to the end he did, even providing notes for the Fendi collection that will show in the coming weeks' Milan season. As inexhaustible as he was, the human condition demands an end.

After an unrivalled marathon career that outlasted all of his peers', Lagerfeld can finally allow himself rest in the pantheon of legends.

stlife@sph.com.sg

• Gordon Ng is a freelance fashion writer.

MORE STORIES on D2

His cutting quips

Designer Karl Lagerfeld was an icon in the fashion world. But the outspoken designer's legacy stretches well beyond the fashion runway. He was also known for his witty repartee and oft controversial quips. Here are some of his most famous lines:

On himself

"I am like a caricature of myself and I like that. It is like a mask. And for me the Carnival of Venice lasts all year long."

On selfies

"They are this horrible thing where you are distorted. The chin is too big, the head is too small. No, this is electronic masturbation."

On interview etiquette

"I had an interview once with some German journalist – some horrible ugly woman. It was in the early days after the communists – maybe a week after – and she wore a yellow sweater that was kind of see-through. She had huge t*** and a huge black bra and she said to me: 'It's impolite; remove your glasses.' I said: 'Do I ask you to remove your bra?'"



On late American artist Andy Warhol (left)
"I shouldn't say this, but, physically, he was quite repulsive."

On Chanel founder Gabrielle "Coco" Chanel

"What I do, Coco would have hated. The label has an image and it's up to me to update it. I do what she never did. I had to find my mark. I had to go from what Chanel was to what it should be, could be, what it had been, to something else."

On sports clothing

"Sweatpants are a sign of defeat. You lost control of your life, so you bought some sweatpants."

On designer wear

"Don't use expensive clothes as a screen for your personal doubts. Be proud of yourself and not only because you wear expensive designer clothes. They are great, but lots of people are happy without them."

On his cat Choupette

"She is like a kept woman. She has a strong personality. She has lunch and dinner with me on the table, with her own food. She doesn't touch my food. She doesn't want to eat on the floor. She sleeps under a pillow and she even knows how to use an iPad. She has two personal maids, for both night and day. She is beyond spoiled."

On intellectuals

"I hate intellectual conversation with intellectuals because I care only about my opinion."

On beauty

"Life is not a beauty contest, some ugly people are great. What I hate are nasty, ugly people... the worst are ugly, short men. Women can be short, but for men it is impossible. It is something that they will never forgive in life... they are mean and they want to kill you."

On children

"They grow so fast, and having adult children makes you look 100 years old. I don't want that."

On his iconic status

"I've always known that I was made to live this way, that I would be this sort of legend."

Compiled by Melissa Heng

KARL LAGERFELD 1933-2019



(Left) Karl Lagerfeld as a student in the 1950s with a model during the presentation of a cocktail coat. (Above left) Lagerfeld and a hairstylist adjusting a model's outfit for his first Chanel Spring/Summer collection show in 1983.



Lagerfeld with British model Stella Tennant during the Metiers D'Art show for Chanel in Paris in 2011. The show, which has existed since 2003, is an homage to the talents of artisans and craftsmen who make haute couture possible.



(Above) Lagerfeld and Virginie Viard, his long-time design studio director and right-hand woman, watching models present creations from his Spring/Summer women's collection for Chanel during Paris Fashion Week in October last year. She has been announced as the successor to the Creative Director position at the luxury label.

(Right) An eccentric modernist who once declared he had no "human feelings", the German designer is nevertheless survived by his godson Hudson Kroenig (both seen at the Chanel Metiers D'Art show in New York in December last year). He had taken to including the boy in his Chanel shows and finales since 2010.

PHOTOS: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE, EPA-EFE, REUTERS, NYTIMES

Singapore fashion insiders mourn

Melissa Heng

Since news of Karl Lagerfeld's death broke on Tuesday evening, the fashion world has been in mourning. Singapore fashion insiders who have been impacted by Lagerfeld's legacy share their thoughts on the unforgettable man.



PHOTO: COURTESY OF KENNETH GOH

"Karl's wit – both on and off the runway – informed my creative vision and helped shape my sartorial discourse. As a stylist and writer, Karl was someone I looked up to for fashion inspiration – from the dramatic fur techniques he employed at Fendi to the genius collections he launched every season on the Chanel runways. Combining technical wizardry with humour and camp, he made fashion so very, very exciting. No one in fashion can say he hasn't been touched by the genius of Karl." Harper's Bazaar editor-in-chief Kenneth Goh (above, with Lagerfeld in 2005), who is in his 40s and has been in the fashion industry for more than 10 years

"It's so sad because it's really the end of an era. He was the last great fashion designer from a golden age. He rewrote the rules about how fashion shows should be perceived. He was one of the first big-name designers who created huge over-the-top sets for his shows. He knew how to play up to the media and market himself as a brand. Now, his image itself has become an icon."



Fashion director and show producer Daniel Boey, 53, who has been dubbed the "godfather of Singapore fashion"

"I saw him in Singapore at the Chanel Cruise show in 2014 and was struck by how unsweaty he looked in our tropical heat and humidity. We were all perspiring, but all I saw was a fine beading of sweat on his upper lip. Insane. But it was in Havana, Cuba, in 2016 that I saw an unexpected side of the 'Kaiser'. We were at the Chanel Cruise 2016 show after-party and Karl was dancing with a few women, moving with such grace and elegance that I was reminded of old Hollywood movies. He was literally a glittering presence on the dance floor in his sequinned jacket."



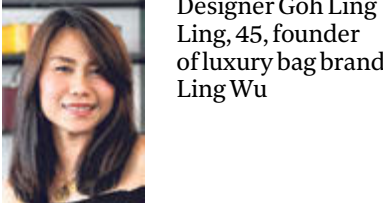
Ms Sharon Lim, 51, lecturer at the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts' school of fashion studies and former Elle Singapore editor-in-chief

"When he took up the offer to work at Chanel in 1983, everybody told him not to flog a dead horse. But he did, and he did the impossible – that horse became a unicorn. Karl was truly the first disrupter, before disruption even became a buzzword. He makes you consider and reconsider what is truly modern and stylish."



SPH Magazines group editor Dhylan Boey, 41, who has been managing editor at Prestige and lifestyle editor at HerWorld

"Karl Lagerfeld made me feel like anything was possible. He made me want to learn more and he has had a massive impact with regard to how I see the fashion world and my work. I was always amazed that he was able to come up with the right thing at the right time. He was truly a Renaissance man."



Designer Goh Ling Ling, 45, founder of luxury bag brand Ling Wu

Could Lagerfeld's cat inherit fortune?

PARIS • Life will still be purr-fect for Karl Lagerfeld's pet Choupette after his death. Already the most famous cat in fashion, the white fluffy Burmese cat he doted on could become the richest feline on the planet.

The eight-year-old has enjoyed a jet-set lifestyle since he "kidnapped" her in 2011 from his young friend, model Baptiste Giabiconi.

Now, she could be about to inherit a slice of his estimated US\$200-million (\$S270-million) fortune.

Long before his death on Tuesday, Lagerfeld said he had made sure Choupette would go on living

in the style she had become accustomed to, with her own bodyguard and two maids.

"Choupette is a rich girl," he once told French television, hinting that he had written her into his will.

"She has her own fortune," he added of her worth, thought to be at least US\$3.4 million, which she earned with him doing advertisements for a German car firm and a Japanese cosmetics brand.

Choupette, who has about 180,000 followers on Instagram, is the hero of a book, Choupette: The Private Life Of A High-Flying Fashion Cat (2014), where she was photographed in the arms of super-

model Linda Evangelista and snuggling with model-turned-actress Laetitia Casta.

The book includes recipes for her favourite meals prepared by some of the best restaurants in Paris.

"She is like a human being, only with an extra quality – silence," said Lagerfeld, who lived alone and admitted that "Choupette is the centre of my world".

Under French law, he could not leave his millions to a cat.

"That's okay," he told reporters who once raised the issue, "because I am not French", hinting that the money could be left in trust. AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE



Designer Karl Lagerfeld's Choupette is a star in her own right, with about 180,000 Instagram followers and appearing in ads as well as German carmaker Opel's calendar in 2015. PHOTO: OPEL

Tribute concert to legendary Zul Sutan

More than 20 bands and singers will put on a concert on Sunday to pay homage to the late home-grown music legend, who died in December

Anjali Raguraman

At the end of every show by home-grown rock band Tania, their late frontman Zul Sutan used to say: “Goodnight, go home.”

To pay tribute to the music legend, a concert named after his signature send-off will be held this Sunday at Hard Rock Cafe Singapore in Cuscaden Road – three days shy of what would have been his 62nd birthday.

Zul, a live music performer in the local scene for more than 40 years, died of health complications in December last year.

More than 20 bands and singers, including one of Hard Rock Cafe’s resident cover bands Jive Talkin’, singer Jacintha Abisheganaden and rocker Douglas Oliveira, will take to the stage to perform songs that Zul used to do.

Hosted by radio personality William Xavier, also known as Mr X, and actress and singer Pam Oei, the show will see performers, friends and family sharing their memories of Zul.

Zul’s daughter Cardejah will also be performing with the remaining five members of Tania.

Over 500 tickets have been sold, but a limited number of tickets will be available at the door at \$20.

All proceeds from the show will go to non-profit group, Ray of Hope Initiative, which raises funds for families in need, the elderly, children and those who need assistance with their medical bills.

The concert is organised by Ms Gwen Khoo, a long-time family



BOOK IT / GOODNIGHT, GO HOME! A NIGHT FOR ZUL

WHERE: Hard Rock Cafe Singapore, HPL House, 50 Cuscaden Road
WHEN: Sunday, 6.30pm till late
ADMISSION: Limited tickets at \$20 at the door
INFO: <https://bit.ly/2tvUhqZ>

Zul Sutan (left) used to be the frontman of home-grown rock band Tania and died of health complications last year.

PHOTO: ZUL TANIA

friend and fan, as well as Ms Carol Moses, Zul’s manager.

Ms Khoo, 58, has followed Zul since she was 16 and first watched him perform at the Pebbles Bar at the now-defunct Singapura Forum Hotel, and subsequently at live music venues such as F&B chain Harry’s as well as Mexican restau-

rant La Salsa, where he was playing every Saturday until last October.

“Zul is like a brother to me and, until today, we still feel his loss,” she says. “After Zul passed, a lot of people did not have the time to grieve or to share moments or pay respects... So with this, we want to celebrate his legacy and his life.”

Jive Talkin’ band leader Raffy Aspier, 62, says they were close friends and recalls how Zul used to join the band on stage and jam with them, especially at the now-defunct Anywhere Music Pub at Tanglin Shopping Centre.

As a band frontman himself, he was always impressed by Zul’s take

on Don McLean’s American Pie, Pink Floyd’s Wish You Were Here and Eric Clapton’s Tears In Heaven – “stuff he could do that I could never do myself”, says Aspier. “He was one of the finest musicians – and a legend.”

anjali@sph.com.sg

Defiant return to the past



Ladytron’s (from far left) Helen Marnie, Daniel Hunt, Mira Aroyo and Reuben Wu.
PHOTO: MARIA LOUCEIRO



INDIEPOP/ ELECTRONIC
LADYTRON
!K7
★★★★☆



EPHYRA
Woman’s Hour
Practise Music
★★★★☆

Eddino Abdul Hadi

After eight years and a couple of false starts, British indie/electronic stalwarts Ladytron have finally made a comeback with their sixth album.

It is somewhat fitting that the Liverpool quartet, who went on hiatus after releasing 2011’s Gravity The Seducer, have gone for a self-titled release.

While Gravity made a detour with a lush and lilting sound, the new tracks see the band going back to the dense, icy and android-chic vibes of their earlier output.

Beneath the synths, dance-worthy beats and reverb-laden harmonies lie distinct sinister undertones.

“We are sirens of the apocalypse,” singers Helen Marnie and Mira Aroyo croon in The Island, which can be seen as a take on current political and social travails, while The Animals sees them lamenting that “there’s no love”.

The other members are Daniel Hunt on synthesizers and guitar, and Reuben Wu on synthesizer.

The evil-clown theatrics of the song Horrorscope even feature live drums from Igor Cavaleira, formerly from Brazilian metal veterans Sepultura.

You’ve Changed is a curious blend of assertive pop and ominous disco while album opener Until The Fire gallops with an urgent pace.

The band sound defiant in Dead-zone (“My resistance is your weakness”) and pull off intricate and layered vocals on Far From Home.

Like Ladytron, Ephra marks a return of sorts for fellow British band Woman’s Hour.

The group broke up in 2016 while recording the follow-up to their acclaimed 2014 debut Conversations.

After some time away from one

another, the trio – Josh Hunnisett (keyboard) and siblings Fiona (vocals) and William Burgess (guitar) – decided to finish up the recordings and release them anyway.

The pressures of following up on the critical success of their debut seem to be reflected in the songs.

The sparse and ethereal Luke might read like a love song on the surface, but there are shades of the communication issues that the band have said affected their ability to work with one another – “Look, am I shouting in a vacuum?/Can you hear me?”

The melancholic strain of Removal Of Hope seems to cement the finality of their decision to disband.

Album opener Don’t Speak is positively haunting, driven by synth arpeggios and Fiona’s yearning voice, while I Can’t Take You Seriously envelops the listener in a blissful haze.

The trio’s art-pop tendencies come to the fore on From Eden To Exile Then Into Dust, an adventurous and intricately crafted tune that features unexpected twists and turns.

It is a shame then that music lovers probably will not be hearing more from them.

MusicCharts

APPLE MUSIC

1. (1) 7 Rings – Ariana Grande
2. (3) Break Up With Your Girlfriend, I’m Bored – Ariana Grande
3. (2) Thank U, Next – Ariana Grande
4. (-) Dalla Dalla – Itzy
5. (6) Without Me – Halsey
6. (10) Dancing With A Stranger – Sam Smith and Normani
7. (4) Sweet But Psycho – Ava Max
8. (7) Sunflower (Spider-Man: Into The Spider-Verse) – Post Malone and Swae Lee
9. (-) Happier – Marshmello & Bastille
10. (-) Solo – Jennie

• For the week of Feb 20 in Singapore

SPOTIFY

1. (1) 7 Rings – Ariana Grande
2. (2) Break Up With Your Girlfriend, I’m Bored – Ariana Grande
3. (4) I’m So Tired – Lauv and Troye Sivan
4. (5) Dancing With A Stranger – Sam Smith and Normani
5. (3) Thank U, Next – Ariana Grande
6. (6) Way Back Home – Shaun, Conor Maynard and Sam Feldt
7. (-) Dalla Dalla – Itzy
8. (7) Without Me – Halsey
9. (9) Sweet But Psycho – Ava Max
10. (8) Sunflower (Spider-Man: Into The Spider-Verse) – Post Malone and Swae Lee

• For the week ending Feb 20

HIT FM

1. (1) Half A Life – Ashin
2. (3) Windy – Wu Tsing-fong
3. (2) Ugly Beauty – Jolin Tsai
4. (12) New Species – Chris Lee
5. (5) Talent – Joker Xue
6. (8) Make A Turn In Front – Neko Highway
7. (4) Kisses For The World – Tanya Chua
8. (6) I’m Fine – Apple Kho
9. (10) Forever Young – Eve Ai
10. (16) Honestly Me – Boon Hui Lu

• For the week ending Feb 10

• Information from Billboard is not available at press time.

Using animal noises to create rocket launch sound

Home-grown, Oscar-nominated sound editor Ai-Ling Lee reveals how she and her team got creative for First Man

John Lui

You are in charge of sound for a movie about astronauts. Your job is to make a rocket launch – an event viewers have seen on screen hundreds of times – sound as fresh and spine-tinglingly scary as it did for those seeing it in person in 1969.

For Singaporean sound editor Ai-Ling Lee’s team working on First Man (2018), the biopic of astronaut Neil Armstrong, the sonic oomph came from a source that had nothing to do with aerospace engineering.

“We introduced animal vocals – elephant trumpets, lion growls, animal stampedes. They create a visceral sense of anxiety,” says Lee on the telephone with The Straits Times earlier this month.

The animal noises were blended into real sounds coming from rocket turbines and ignition chambers so they can be heard, but not on a conscious level.

“But now that I’ve said it, if you re-watch the film, you can probably hear it,” she says with a laugh.

The Los Angeles-based Lee has four Oscar nominations.

Two years ago, for her work on the musical, La La Land, she and Mildred Iatrou Morgan were nominated for Best Sound Editing. She also got a nod in Best Sound Mixing, with Andy Nelson and Steve A. Morrow.

Next week, on Oscar night – which takes place on Monday morning in Singapore – she will find out if she picks up her first win for her work on First Man, directed by Damien Chazelle, who also helmed La La Land.

The 40-year-old is again nominated with Morgan for Sound Editing, and for Sound Mixing with Jon Taylor, Frank A. Montano and Mary H. Ellis.

First Man has two other nomina-



Home-grown sound editor Ai-Ling Lee (above) is nominated in the Oscar categories of Sound Editing and Sound Mixing for last year’s First Man, which stars Ryan Gosling (left).

PHOTOS: THE WASHINGTON POST, COURTESY OF AI-LING LEE

tions, for Visual Effects and Production Design.

Audio authenticity is key for the creative team, Lee says.

But where does one get quality recordings that capture the majesty of a rocket launch from 1969? The team would have to recreate it from contemporary sources.

“We lucked out,” she says. During the film’s production at Cape Canaveral, the site of the Apollo launches in the 1960s and 1970s, the private aerospace company SpaceX would launch Falcon

Heavy, the most powerful rocket in operation.

The First Man crew came with sound-recording gear.

“We set up microphones on the launch pad to get close-up sounds, such as the ignition sounds. We also set up microphones further away because the launch sounds different from a distance,” she says.

First Man is a study in contrasts.

Armstrong, played by Ryan Gosling, is in screaming jet planes, then in a quiet setting at home, before the story follows him into

his Apollo 11 capsule as he roars into space in 1969, landing on the Moon.

The sound team was brought in early to map out their tasks, she says.

“Damien showed us his animatics, which are an edited sequence of storyboard, and he added sounds in there to give us an idea,” says Lee, who left for Hollywood in 1998.

She has racked up credits in action films such as X-Men: Days Of Future Past (2014), 300: Rise Of An Empire (2014) and also in dramas and comedies, including the Disney animated feature Tangled (2010)

and the Jim Carrey vehicle, Yes Man (2008).

One of her tasks is to work out how distant a sound should be from a character. Hearing only what a character hears is part of storytelling, she says.

“How close are we to the sound? In the cockpit sequences, we see only what the astronauts see.

“We can’t show things that are happening outside. The sound has to support the narrative,” she says.

johnlui@sph.com.sg

Time-travel sequel takes on a frantic mood



Actress Jessica Rothe reprises her role as university student Tree Gelbman in the sequel to Happy Death Day (2017). PHOTO: UIP

REVIEW / SCIENCE-FICTION THRILLER

HAPPY DEATH DAY 2U (PG13)
100 minutes/Now showing/★★★★☆

The story: In the sequel to Happy Death Day (2017), university student Tree Gelbman (Jessica Rothe) is once more reliving the same day over and over again. This time, however, she gets to the source of the time loop: She is living the unintended consequences of a nearby physics project. But solving that puzzle only opens the door to bigger, more mind-bending dilemmas and even more murders.

John Lui

At several points, the wheels threaten to fly off the wagon – the plot branches into directions that would take a whiteboard and a flow

chart to keep track of who is killed or about to be killed, and who the murderers are.

In the first film, the game-reset idea allowed Tree (Rothe) to be victim and detective. She died, the day reset and, with each iteration, she crept closer to unmasking her killer.

But that slasher-movie-meets-Groundhog Day (1993) premise is gone, replaced by a plot that picks at a time-travel loophole.

In movies like Back To The Future (1985), when Marty McFly finds himself in his new, happy future at the film’s end, how is it he is not troubled by the fact that he is a fake?

Broke McFly has, in all the important ways, stolen Rich McFly’s life. The former has none of the memories of family and loved ones enjoyed by the latter. Time travel, in other words, facilitates identity theft.

That is the quandary in which

Tree finds herself.

While she struggles with imposter syndrome as a result of time tampering, murderous deeds occur, but the crimes take a back seat to Tree’s version of Neo’s red-pill-versus-blue-pill struggle in The Matrix (1999).

Tonally, because there is more story to get through, the light comedy of the first movie has been supplanted by a more frantic, adventure-based mood.

The ticking clock in the movie is the machine in the physics laboratory that caused Tree’s time-looping problem and is also the key to fixing it.

Its ability to work is thrown for a loop by school administrators, who appear as a new set of villains inadvertently helping the killers.

Thankfully, Tree’s stay-or-go dilemma is emotionally astute and poignant, saving this story from sinking into its own convolutions.

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Serenity stars Matthew McConaughey as a fisherman on a hunt for a giant tuna and Anne Hathaway (both left) as his ex-wife. PHOTO: GOLDEN VILLAGE

Hunt that turns into mystery thriller

Writer-director Steven Knight and stars Matthew McConaughey and Anne Hathaway aim to reinvent the noir genre in Serenity

Alison de Souza
In Los Angeles

The movie *Serenity* is a shape-shifter: What starts as a *Moby Dick* story about a man obsessed with catching a big fish changes with the arrival of a woman from his past, then morphs into a mystery thriller with an unusual twist.

This atypical narrative reeled in not one but two Oscar-winning actors – Matthew McConaughey and Anne Hathaway.

Along with writer and director Steven Knight, they sat down with *The Straits Times* and other media at a recent Los Angeles press day for the film, which opens in Singapore today.

McConaughey, 49, plays Baker Dill, a fishing-boat captain down on his luck, and Hathaway, 36, is a woman named Karen who suddenly walks back into his life.

Hathaway – who won the Best Supporting Actress Oscar for the musical drama *Les Misérables* (2012) – was a long-time fan of Knight's writing, especially his acclaimed independent drama *Locke* (2013), whose gripping story is told entirely through speaker-phone conversations in a car.

"I was so excited to get a script written by Steven Knight. We had met a couple of years prior and I loved *Locke*," she says.

Knight's screenplay for *Serenity* was unusual as well: It initially presents her character as a classic

film-noir female, then slowly undermines that stereotype.

"It was so amazing to get to explore the language of noir, which is so misogynistic, given all the waves of feminism that have happened between then and now," says the *Brokeback Mountain* (2005) and *The Dark Knight Rises* (2012) star.

Here, she got "to play this woman who, in a typical noir film, would be described as no good, dangerous and all of these terms that have nothing to do with the most pressing reality of her life, which is that she is in a horribly abusive relationship – the situation of most women in noirs".

But unlike in those movies, her character is "not helpless in her helplessness", says Hathaway, who is married to actor and producer Adam Shulman, 31, and has a two-year-old son.

"And I just found that to be an incredible opportunity to subvert audience expectations, which is a big joy of mine (as) an actress at this stage in my career."

Knight, too, relished the chance to reinvent the fatalistic, cynical crime dramas of the 1940s and 1950s.

The film-maker's idea was to "set up a sort of noirish movie that appears to be just that, and then pull the rug out from under it completely".

The 59-year-old set himself the challenge of first "constructing a sort of surface story" – one where he would "tap the tradition of the American hero, going back as far as *Moby Dick* and *Captain Ahab*, where the hero often is adrift and a loner".

"Then at a very inconvenient moment", the story would "completely take everything away – completely remove the stakes and remake the stakes differently", he says.

Amid these twists and turns, however, the film's leading man found an emotional anchor: the relationship between Dill and his young son, whom he is separated from but still shares a powerful bond with.



Says McConaughey, who has three children aged six to 10 with wife and model Camila Alves, 37: "One of the things in it for me was that Baker Dill's only reality is his relationship with and love for his son."

"He's always having a dialogue with his son, no matter where his son is," says the star, who won the Best Actor Oscar for the AIDS drama *Dallas Buyers Club* (2013) and an Emmy nomination for the television crime show *True Detective* (2014).

This film was a reunion of sorts for him and Hathaway – they appeared together in the science-fiction drama *Interstellar* (2014), another mind-bending, genre-blending tale.

"I knew from working with her the first time that she was a complete professional – that she's as good as there is between action and cut, and that she shows up and there's a very involved conversation about the scene, the relationship," says McConaughey.

"It's not a first-grade conversation – it's the conversation you can have only if you've done your work together. There's a trust there."

Hathaway returns the compliment. "Matthew, for me, is the gold standard," she says. "I learnt so much just from getting to be around him on *Interstellar*."

"I learnt so much about going straight into the heart of every moment and trying to mine everything you can from there."

stlife@sph.com.sg

• *Serenity* opens in Singapore today.

It was so amazing to get to explore the language of noir, which is so misogynistic, given all the waves of feminism that have happened between then and now.

”

ACTRESS ANNE HATHAWAY (above centre, with actor Matthew McConaughey, left, and writer and director Steven Knight) on her role in *Serenity*. The film initially presents her character as a classic film-noir female, then slowly undermines that stereotype

Noir attempt falls flat

REVIEW / THRILLER

SERENITY (M18)

106 minutes/Now showing/★☆☆☆

The story: On a tropical island, Baker Dill (Matthew McConaughey) is a fisherman obsessed with hooking a giant tuna he has named Justice. Local businesswoman Constance (Diane Lane) is a benefactress and gives him money when he runs short. One day, his ex-wife Karen (Anne Hathaway) shows up with a plan that will make him rich.

John Lui

Sultry. Everything is sultry here.

McConaughey's glare is sultry, so is Lane's stare. Hathaway oozes sultry when she walks.

The village bar, the boats, the fish market – all sultry. The sweat on everyone's brow screams sultry.

This is a tragic example of a film that stinks in the first half, then spends the second half explaining that the first half was bad on purpose, but using a rationale so preposterous that it makes the second half worse than the first.

McConaughey is in every shot – or rather, his sultriness is.

He takes a nude swim in one scene, allowing a good view of his ego and lack of judgment. His assets are on fuller display here than when he was in the male stripper comedy *Magic Mike* (2012).

Making everything feel stranger and more soft porn-like are his liaisons with Lane, who plays Constance, Dill's sugar mummy.

Rather than shoot their scenes as a straightforward sex-for-money exchange, which would have been honest and interesting, it is viewed through dreamy, romance-novel gauze. Their post-coital chats, wreathed in cigarette smoke, are, yes, languorous and sultry.

All this steaminess is an appetiser for the main course, which is Hathaway's Karen, who does a bit of *Hat Act*ing, when her eyes flash from under a brim.

She appears to be doing an impersonation of a noir thriller vamp for laughs. But she is deadly serious and, later, there is an explanation for the Jessica Rabbit impression.

Anyway, cue the furious coupling, which, if this were a true noir, would be sensual. But for reasons that are made clear later, the event is about as sexy as a visit to a government polyclinic.

British writer-director Steven Knight has an Oscar nomination for writing *Dirty Pretty Things* (2002), a socially conscious drama. He has a long career writing strong drama-thrillers that speak to current affairs (*Eastern Promises*, 2007; *Redemption*, 2013).

But he is fond of classic genres, which seem to turn out less well for him – see his lukewarm foray into espionage romance *Allied* (2016) or the tepid foodie heartwarmer *The Hundred-Foot Journey* (2014).

Serenity is Knight's stab at the tropical noir format, in the style of *Body Heat* (1981) or *Blood Simple* (1984), but the result, which applies a layer of gloopy sentimentality over a tale of greed and seduction set on a boat, is a slice of seafood best left on the plate.



In *Cold Pursuit*, actor Liam Neeson plays a father who seeks revenge on those who may have murdered his son. PHOTO: STUDIOCANAL S.A.S

‘Revenge begets revenge’

Cold Pursuit star Liam Neeson says when people try to hurt others back, everyone loses

Alison de Souza
In New York

Liam Neeson set off a storm of controversy while promoting his new revenge thriller, *Cold Pursuit*, relating a horrifying revenge tale of his own that prompted accusations of racism against the actor.

But the Irishman was more mellow when he spoke to The Straits Times and other press in

New York recently about the film, which opens in Singapore today.

Although the story casts him as a man on a bloody killing spree to avenge the death of his son, in person, the gently spoken star roundly condemns the whole notion of revenge, even if it is in the name of a loved one.

This is because growing up in politically turbulent Northern Ireland in the 1960s showed him that “revenge begets revenge” and everyone loses.

While on the same publicity tour, however, the 66-year-old had an unguarded moment, telling a journalist of *The Independent* that decades ago, when a friend told him she had been raped by a black man, he flew into a rage.

According to the Feb 4 article,

Neeson then roamed the streets with a bludgeon hoping to kill a random black man to avenge her, although he snapped out of it and is ashamed of how he behaved.

After much criticism, the actor later went on an American news programme to clarify that he is “not racist”.

He says: “This was nearly 40 years ago. I had never felt this feeling before, which was a primal urge to lash out.”

During the interview with ST in New York, Neeson, best known for the *Taken* action films (2008 to 2014) and his Oscar-nominated role in the Holocaust biopic, *Schindler’s List* (1993), claims his latest film demonstrates the folly of revenge.

“It’s good to laugh at human folly

and the ridiculousness of revenge.

“Of course, it’s a primal urge to want to hurt someone who has hurt your family. We all have that primal instinct,” says the actor, whose two sons with his late wife, actress Natasha Richardson, are aged 23 and 22.

Neeson adds: I grew up in Northern Ireland during ‘the Troubles’, as they were known in the 1960s. So, I’m familiar with that and no one comes out a winner.”

There were other reasons Neeson wanted to play the protagonist of *Cold Pursuit*, an ordinary man who becomes a cold-blooded killer.

The film is director Hans Petter Moland’s remake of his own Norwegian-language movie, the dark comedy, *In Order Of Disappearance* (2014), which Neeson saw and loved, although “I felt guilty about laughing through it”.

Moland offered him the lead in “an Americanised version” and Neeson said yes after reading the script, which, unlike the original starring Stellan Skarsgard, features a large cast of Native American characters.

“It’s got a Coen brothers-esque thing running through it too”, Neeson adds, referring to the eccentric characters and dark humour of *Fargo* (1996) film-makers Joel and Ethan Coen.

The performer also fancied a change of pace from the usual slick action heroes he played in films such as the *Taken* franchise.

“I’d been playing action guys with a certain set of skills,” he says,

quoting the trademark line of his *Taken* alter ego. “So, it was great to play someone who was a total amateur at that stuff.”

Cold Pursuit is a more comedic script than the ones that usually cross his desk, he reveals. “I guess the key to doing that stuff is the more serious you play it, the funnier it is.”

After years as one of Hollywood’s most bankable action stars, however, the star acknowledges that his career may be entering a different phase whether he likes it or not.

But he remains grateful for the opportunities he has had.

“In the early days, it was just great to get work. As a professional actor, I was a theatre actor for five years, then (director) John Boorman gave me this part in (the movie) *Excalibur* in 1980 and I just fell in love with cinema and the process of being with a film crew.

“So, after that, there was no set plan, other than to move to London, then from London to Los Angeles. I just went where the work was,” says the star, who resides in New York.

“The moment in the sun – certainly in the genre films – might be fading, you know. A 20-year-old now was 10 when *Taken* (2008) came out. He wouldn’t have seen it.

“So, there are shifting sands all the time in this business. I just feel blessed to get the chance to work and I mean that, most humbly. It’s great.”

stlife@sph.com.sg

Bold remake of story of mad dad on a rampage

REVIEW / REVENGE THRILLER

COLD PURSUIT (NC16)
119 minutes/Now showing/★★★★☆

The story: Nels Coxman (Liam Neeson) operates a snow plough for a Colorado ski resort. His son is found dead from a drug overdose. Later, he is told that his son may have been murdered by a mob boss nicknamed Viking (Tom Bateman). Coxman takes advantage of his record as an upstanding citizen and knowledge of the mountains to take down the gang – one member at a time.

John Lui

Any other time, this parade of garottings, throat slashings and falls from height would come and go from cinemas without a fuss.

But because star Liam Neeson this month gave an interview in which he admitted to seeking revenge on a random black man

years ago because a friend was raped, this movie is as blanketed in controversy as the snowy mountains that form much of the story’s backdrop.

In a role that cannot by any means be said to be a stretch, Neeson plays a decent bloke with a set of skills that allows him to break a man’s neck with not much more than a stern look.

More than once, the actor has been the personification of white man’s rage in European-financed films featuring brown-skinned or Slavic villains intent on corrupting Western women.

The racial subtext of his pulpier works is not the least bit subtle, but here, in a welcome change, the villain, Viking (British actor Bateman) is a suave member of the city’s elite.

It is not just Viking who gets a full-bodied supporting role. Almost all other characters, good and evil, are invested with personalities and drives. There is much less focus on Neeson’s one-man army than in a standard revenge flick.

One reason for deviating from

the bullet-bloodbath template might be that this movie is a remake of a 2014 Norwegian original.

The makers made a commercially bold decision to Americanise the story without sanding away its sharp edges. Norwegian director Hans Petter Moland was brought in to helm this do-over of his original movie.

Moland has given his work a couple of flourishes from the Martin McDonagh school (Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri; 2017; In Bruges, 2008).

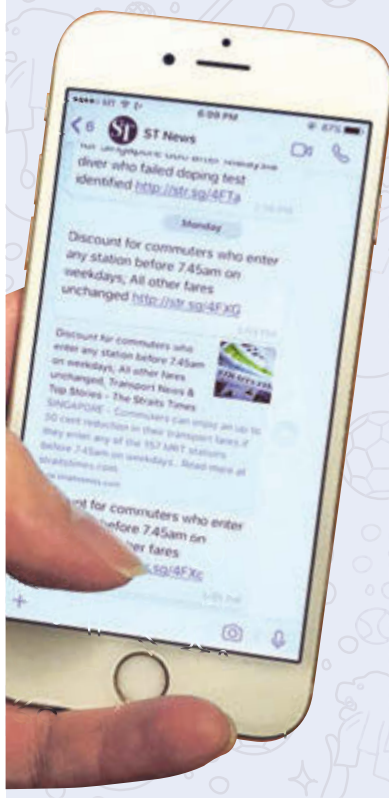
For example, there is the gallows humour – fitfully sustained but still welcome – the idea of a killer and deaths which come out of the blue, without foreshadowing.

Neeson might have shown poor judgment in the interview, but his decision to take up a role here is sound.

He might be once more playing a man on a rampage, but there is enough here to make this mad-dad story a cut above average.

● *Cold Pursuit* is screening in cinemas.

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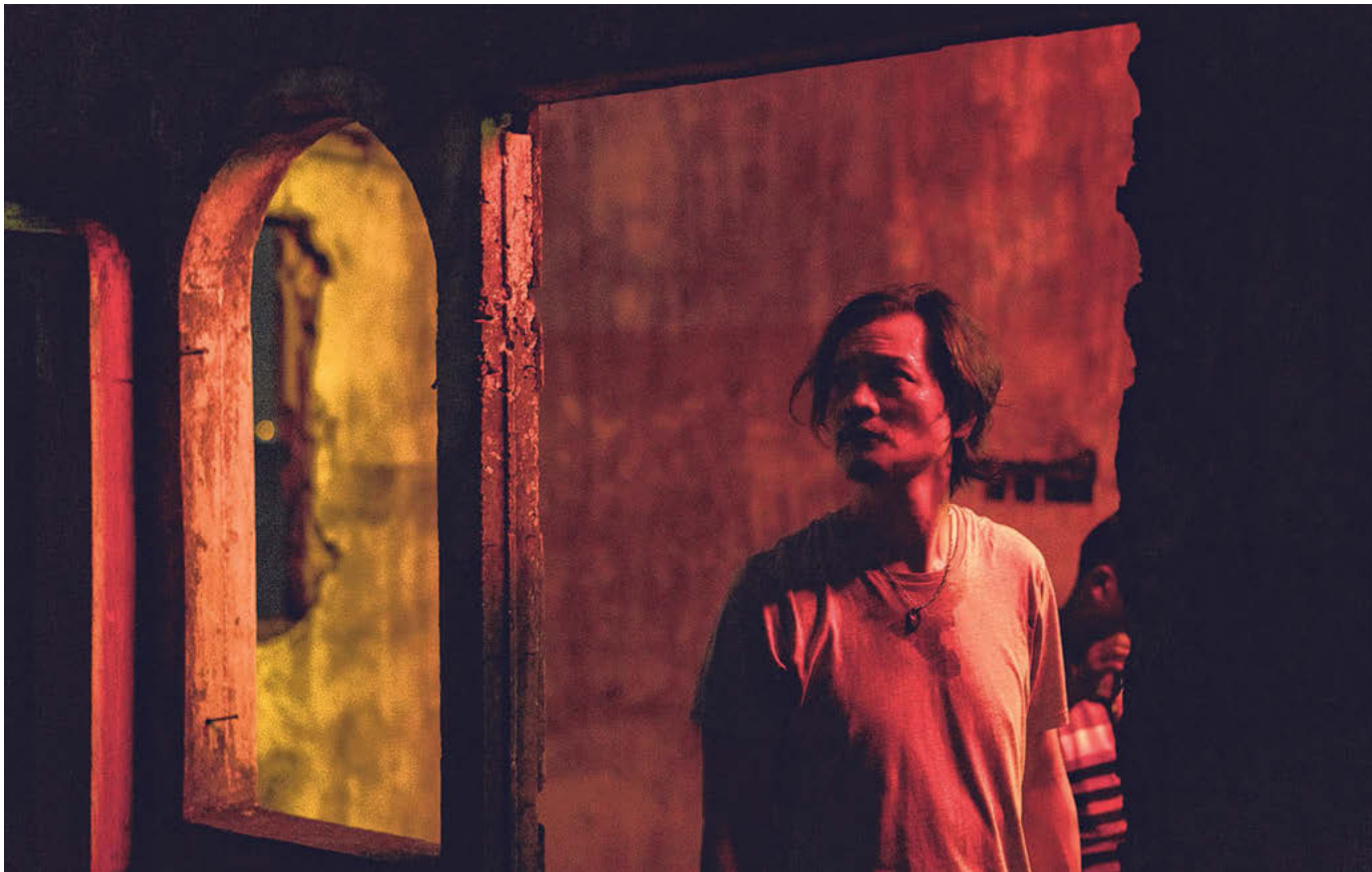
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Peter Yu gets his movie break



Actor Peter Yu plays Detective Lok in director Yeo Siew Hua's award-winning drama, *A Land Imagined*.
PHOTO: AKANGA FILM, MM2 ENTERTAINMENT

The former Mediacorp actor says taking on various jobs has put him in good stead to play a detective in *A Land Imagined*

John Lui

After a decade at Mediacorp, Peter Yu walked away in 2000. The Channel 8 actor wanted to see what the wider world had to offer. He busied himself selling cars, property and stocks. He drove a taxi.

He was also a full-time gambler. "Gambling was my career for three years," he says with a laugh. He bet on football and created a home office, where its walls were covered in maps and fixtures from around the world. He analysed scores and consulted experts. But that line of work tanked, following heavy losses in the third year of his attempt to become a professional punter. Then, starting in 2015, acting offers trickled in for parts in commercials, short films and television shows. Now a fervent Christian, he attributes the sudden influx of offers to the will of God. In church testimonials that can be found online, he speaks about how his life spun out of control following the divorce from his first wife, actress and host Quan Yifeng, with whom he has a daughter.

These days, the mellow 51-year-old says he enjoys acting more than he used to in the 1990s. A role in a short film led to his discovery by film-maker Yeo Siew Hua, who cast Yu as investigator Lok in his award-winning drama, *A Land Imagined*. Last year, the missing-persons mystery won the Golden Leopard prize at the Locarno Film Festival and the Best Film prize in the Asian Feature Film Competition section of the Singapore International Film Festival. *A Land Imagined* is showing in cinemas. The years that Yu spent doing various jobs has made him a better actor, he reckons. For example, in the scenes shot in the industrial zone in Tuas, the sight of massive earth-moving machinery, noise, fumes and

intense lights might seem otherworldly to most Singaporeans. But not to him. He felt comfortable there. "As a taxi driver, you drive all over, so you see everything," he says. But filming took the actor to places he had never been, such as the all-hours cybercafes in which migrant workers from China might spend hours chatting with friends back home or playing games. Shooting scenes also took him to the dormitories where workers lived, places which few Singaporeans have seen. "Who will want to go to the dormitories? Yeo Siew Hua put it on the screen. He is showing you the real Singapore," he says. Overseas, festival audiences have been fascinated by a side of a crazy rich country they had not seen or

heard about, he adds. Now that his acting career is gathering momentum, he is not looking back. He has a supporting part in the television series based on Dick Lee's stage musical, *Fried Rice Paradise*, set to launch on Channel 5 and Toggle in July. Yu, who is married to sales merchandiser Brenda Leow, can also be seen in the monster movie, *Circle Line*, expected in cinemas later this year. Yu and Leow have two sons, aged two and six. He is now busy enough as an actor that he can give up his other job. "I returned the taxi I was renting to ComfortDelGro. It was costing too much to let it sit idle," he says.

johnlui@sph.com.sg

Dreamlike detective story that seeks to unsettle

REVIEW / MYSTERY DRAMA

A LAND IMAGINED (NC16)
95 minutes/Now showing/
★★★★

The story: The police are called in when a Chinese national, Wang (Liu Xiaoyi), vanishes from his work site. Detective Lok (Peter Yu) retraces Wang's steps and his eyes are opened to a twilight world inhabited by only migrant workers in Singapore: their dormitories, cybercafes and celebrations. He also finds that their overseers, who take sand from other countries to grow Singapore's coastline, are not telling him everything they know.

John Lui

In this dreamlike detective story, a cop who cannot sleep searches for a man who cannot wake up from a nightmare. In the background, a woman from China yearns to be anywhere but here, while men from Bangladesh have made a space for themselves that is home away from home.

Singaporean film-maker Yeo Siew Hua tries to crack the puzzle that is Singapore in this ambitious, mostly-Mandarin film that grapples with issues of ethics and identity, all wrapped in a police procedural. The philosophy graduate from the National University of Singapore likes to ask the big questions: What is the meaning of home? For the sake of comfort and modernity, how much is too much in terms of human suffering? In a variation on the conundrum of the ship of Theseus, can a physical space composed of particles taken from other lands be said to belong to its new owners? That intellectual remove gives the film an air of coolness and at the cost of urgency and immediacy. And yes, characters do peer into the distance while musing about alienation and belonging. This reviewer cannot remember if smoke curled upwards from cigarettes held in their fingers while they spoke, but it would come as a surprise if it did not. This is Yeo's second feature after the experimental film, *In The House Of Straw* (2009). Last year, *A Land Imagined* snagged the Golden

Leopard prize at the Locarno Film Festival and the Best Film prize in the Asian Feature Film Competition section of the Singapore International Film Festival. Yeo's investigator character Lok, played with a lovely hangdog expressiveness by Peter Yu, is a cosmic detective, a man whose radar picks up signals others cannot sense, but which enable him to find his quarry. Chinese actress Luna Kwok is Mindy, a femme fatale of sorts whose observations spur Lok on his search. The villains are the developers who create the straight lines that make up the Singapore coastline and they are remarkably concrete characters, in contrast to the goings-on in the rest of the film. That tonal shift is jarring, but it is a small flaw in a bold work that seeks to unsettle – figuratively and literally – the ground beneath our feet.

- *A Land Imagined* is screening at Cathay Cineplexes (Orchard Cineleisure, JEM, Parkway Parade and The Cathay). It will also screen at GV VivoCity and The Projector.

Top10Movies

SINGAPORE

1. (1) *Alita: Battle Angel*
2. (2) *How To Train Your Dragon: The Hidden World*
3. (-) *When Ghost Meets Zombie*
4. (6) *The Lego Movie 2*
5. (3) *The Knight Of Shadows: Between Yin And Yang*
6. (4) *The New King Of Comedy*
7. (5) *Killer Not Stupid*
8. (7) *Integrity*
9. (-) *The Favourite*
10. (9) *Green Book*

• Information from Cinematograph Film Exhibitors Association

UNITED STATES

1. (-) *Alita: Battle Angel*
2. (1) *The Lego Movie 2: The Second Part*
3. (-) *Isn't It Romantic*
4. (2) *What Men Want*
5. (-) *Happy Death Day 2U*
6. (3) *Cold Pursuit*
7. (4) *The Upside*
8. (5) *Glass*
9. (6) *The Prodigy*
10. (7) *Green Book*

• Information from boxofficemojo.com

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Speakers



Rohit Brijnath
Assistant
Sports Editor,
The Straits Times



Jasmine Ser
National shooter

Star Trek spin-off idea came from Michelle Yeoh

Series based on Philippa Georgiou – the starship captain played by Yeoh on Star Trek: Discovery – is already in the works

Alison de Souza
In Los Angeles

Five decades after Captain Kirk and Mr Spock first appeared on television, the Star Trek universe continues to live long and prosper on the small screen.

Star Trek: Discovery, a series set a decade before the events of the original 1966 to 1969 show, was launched in 2017 – the first new Star Trek show in 12 years.

And it has been successful enough that several spin-offs are now in the works, including one revolving around actress Michelle Yeoh’s Discovery character, another starring Patrick Stewart’s Captain Jean-Luc Picard from an earlier series, and at least two animated shows, one for adults and one for children.

Star Trek: Discovery creator Alex Kurtzman teased details of some of these new ventures while chatting with The Straits Times and other press at a recent gathering of television critics in Pasadena.

It turns out the idea to do a spin-off based on Philippa Georgiou – the starship captain Yeoh played as a recurring role on Star Trek: Discovery – came from the 56-year-old Malaysian actress herself, who also portrayed matriarch Eleanor Young in the hit romantic comedy Crazy Rich Asians (2018).

“In Season 1, Michelle came to me and said, ‘Let’s do a spin-off of this character.’ And I took a minute (to think about it) because it was clearly such a brilliant idea, except the series hadn’t aired yet so no-

body knew what it was going to be.

“So the minute we became successful, we started that conversation,” says Kurtzman, 45, who also co-wrote the films Star Trek (2009) and Star Trek Into The Darkness (2013).

What convinced him was not just Yeoh’s performance in the main show, which received praise from critics and fans for, among other things, her decision to keep her Malaysian-Chinese accent for the character.

He saw that the spin-off would be a way to develop a narrative thread explored in Season 2 of the main series, Star Trek: Discovery, new episodes of which are now being released weekly on Netflix in Singapore.

In particular, the Yeoh spin-off will explore the role of a shady group of characters in the Star Trek canon known as Section 31, Kurtzman says.

“If you know Section 31, you know that by the time (the 1993 to 1999 TV series) Deep Space Nine comes around, they’ve gone underground and they are this mysterious organisation – there’s nothing official about it.”

But as Trekkies would have spotted from the trailers for Star Trek: Discovery Season 2, Section 31 once had “a badge, and there’s a ship and all these different things”.

“So the question is: How do they get from here to there? What happened in that window of time between those two pivot points in Section 31’s evolution?”

Kurtzman discloses that he and the writers are “breaking story” on the Yeoh series right now. “Our hope is that we will have a script in the next couple of months and then as soon as Discovery Season 3 is over, we’re rolling right into that show.”

Meanwhile, filming begins in about two months for the other big spin-off starring Stewart, he says.

The 78-year-old British actor will reprise his role as Captain Picard of the USS Enterprise from Star Trek:



Michelle Yeoh in season 2 of Star Trek: Discovery. PHOTO: CBS INTERACTIVE

The Next Generation (1987 to 1994).

But Heather Kadin, an executive producer on Star Trek: Discovery, clarifies that this will not be a “sequel to The Next Generation” or a reunion of characters from that show. Rather, “it’s the next chapter for Picard”.

“We want to ground the show because that’s very important to Patrick,” she says of the yet-to-be-titled series, which is due to debut in the United States later this year.

There are also “a minimum of

two” animated spin-offs in the pipeline, according to Kurtzman.

The ones that have already been announced are Star Trek: Lower Decks, a comedy series for adults told from the perspective of the support crew on one of the Starfleet’s least important ships, and a show on the Nickelodeon channel for younger viewers.

Kurtzman says the main series and the spin-offs will link together only “peripherally”, though.

This is because it is important that “each show offers a unique per-

spective” and “that it doesn’t feel like you’re getting the same thing from each one”, he says.

“In that sense, each show has its own identity.”

But he is confident that there is a big enough audience for it all.

“Thankfully, the universe is growing so fast and people are excited about it.”

stlife@sph.com.sg

• Star Trek: Discovery Season 2 is on Netflix.

Screen Test

Live, die and repeat



Alison de Souza

The premise of Groundhog Day – the 1993 Bill Murray comedy about a man forced to relive the same day over and over – is so full of dramatic potential that you can understand the desire to remake it.

And there have been a few successful attempts, notably with Edge of Tomorrow (2014), which leveraged the idea to help Tom Cruise fight aliens.

Russian Doll, a new series created by Orange Is The New Black star Natasha Lyonne, borrows the same conceit.

Nadia (Lyonne), a New York computer-game designer, dies shortly after her 36th birthday party. She then inexplicably finds herself back at the party and reliving the hours that follow, including another death. And after that it is live, die and repeat.

One issue with doing this in a television show and not a movie is the longer runtime – in this case, eight half-hour episodes.

The temptation is to pull a lot more rabbits out of the hat to keep viewers engaged and distracted

from the story’s recursiveness, while also differentiating it from Groundhog Day.

And so Russian Doll ends up being a magician at a children’s party. It throws every trick at the wall – existential musings, metaphors for trauma and death, shiny pop-culture, literary and gaming references or Easter eggs – hoping a few stick.

Some do. Wondering why she is stuck in a time loop, Nadia posits the notion that it is like a glitch in a computer game. Like many ideas the show flirts with, this is abandoned quickly, but it does add some philosophical bite to the proceedings. Maybe this is a space-time glitch, or like being stuck on one level of a computer game.

The rules of that game are, of course, made up. But they do not make sense even by the end of the show, when it becomes clear they were contorted to fit the plot, which is in turn there to serve Nadia’s emotional journey.

There’s nothing wrong with that, of course, and it can be compelling if you buy into Lyonne’s performance. But her mannered depiction of a certain kind of snarky New Yorker can be grating and it has all the subtlety of one of her more cartoonish deaths: a large object falling on the head.

The true-crime series **Dirty John**, in contrast, does not affect any



subtlety or high-concept drama.

Yet despite its potboiler sensibilities, it hides a surprisingly sharp commentary on manipulation and domestic abuse.

Based on a hugely-popular Los Angeles Times podcast, this is the true story of Debra Newell (Connie Britton), a wealthy 50something who falls for John Meehan (Eric Bana), a handsome “doctor” she meets online.

John turns out to be a consummate liar and conman. But Debra figures this out too late, ignoring red flags and the misgivings of her two daughters, who never warm to him.

The series chronicles this

VIEW IT / RUSSIAN DOLL

Netflix

★★★★☆

DIRTY JOHN

Netflix

★★★★☆

Russian Doll stars Natasha Lyonne as Nadia (left), who dies shortly after her 36th birthday party and finds herself back at the party, reliving the hours before her death. PHOTO: NETFLIX

Dirty John does offer some good answers to that question, though.

Debra is wilfully blind to John’s faults, to be sure, but she is all too human in her hopeful romanticism. Many women would have melted at his charm offensive, which includes an astonishing “seduction by smoothie” technique.

Finally, the show details how Debra’s own mother may have undermined her and her sister by siding with each of their abusive spouses. It is an insightful nod to the way domestic abuse is often socially enabled – not bad for a pulpy true-crime yarn.

Comics

BABY BLUES



GARFIELD



Free to air

CHANNEL 5

AM
6.00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16 (PG) (V)
7.00 First Look Asia (Simulcast From CNA) (CA)
9.00 The Dr Oz Show 10 (PG) (IE)
10.00 The \$100,000 Pyramid 2 (PG) (V)
10.30 Everyday Gourmet 3 (HD) (IE)
11.00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16 (PG) (V)
PM
12.00 Martha Bakes 7 (IE)
12.30 Gordon Ramsay's Ultimate Cookery Course (IE)
1.00 Wheel Of Fortune 36 (CC) (V)
1.30 Kin (PG) (CC) (D)
2.00 Phua Chu Kang Pte Ltd 4 (SC)
2.30 On The Red Dot – Risky Business (CA)
3.00 The Dr Oz Show 10 (PG) (IE)
4.00 Rojak (PG) (SC)
4.30 Survivor 37 (PG) (V)
5.30 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16 (PG) (V)
6.30 The \$100,000 Pyramid 2 (PG) (V)
7.00 Wheel Of Fortune 36 (CC) (V)
7.30 America's Got Talent: The Champions (V) (Season Finale)
8.30 Kin (PG) (CC) (D)
9.00 News 5
9.30 Talking Point 2018 (HD) (CA)
10.00 The Resident (PG) (D)
11.00 NCIS 15 (PG13) (D)
AM
12.00 Kin (PG) (CC) (D)
12.30 Lion Moms (PG) (D)
1.30 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16 (PG) (V)
2.20 Hawaii Five-O 7 (PG13) (D)
3.10 Lethal Weapon (PG13) (D)
4.10 Martha Bakes 7 (IE)
4.40 Gordon Ramsay's Ultimate Cookery Course (IE)
5.10 The Dr Oz Show 10 (PG) (IE)

CHANNEL 8

AM
6.00 Golden Age Talentime (V)
7.00 Sidewalk Scientist (IE)
7.30 Hello Singapore Highlights (News)
8.00 Walk With Me (PG) (CC) (D)
9.00 Morning Express (News)
9.30 Jalan Jalan (PG) (CC) (D)

10.00 Garden Of Treasures 3 (CC) (IE)
10.30 Night Market Life Aka Life (PG) (D)
PM
12.30 JML Home Shopping (Infomercial)
1.00 News 8 At One
1.30 118 (PG) (CC) (D)
2.00 Little Counsellor (S)
2.30 The Precedents (PG) (D)
3.30 Golden Melody (V)
4.30 Taste Of Life (PG) (D)
5.30 When Duty Calls (PG) (CC) (D)
6.30 Hello Singapore (CA)
7.30 Jalan Jalan (PG) (CC) (D)
8.00 Fun With SINGnese (CC) (IE)
9.00 Walk With Me (PG) (CC) (D)
10.00 News Tonight
10.30 Focus (CC) (CA)
11.00 Princess Agents (PG13) (D)
AM
12.00 The Princess Weiyoung (PG) (D)
1.00 Taste The World (IE)
2.00 Fiery Passion (D)
4.00 A Place Called Home (PG) (D)

CHANNEL U

PM
3.00 Unique Lodging (CC) (IE)
4.00 The Food Detectives 2 (IE)
4.30 Big Big World 3 (IE)
5.00 Cheongdamdong Scandal (PG) (CC) (D)
6.00 The Girl Who Sees Smells (PG) (CC) (D)
7.00 My Father Is Strange (PG) (CC) (D)
9.00 World Food (CC) (IE)
10.00 Brother's Keeper 2 (PG13) (CC) (D)
11.00 News Tonight
11.30 World Food (CC) (IE)
AM
12.30 My Father Is Strange (PG) (CC) (D)
2.30 Close

CNA

AM
6.00 Singapore Tonight
7.00 First Look Asia
9.00 Asia Business First
10.02 When We Play
11.00 News Now
PM
1.02 Ask The Finance Minister 2019
2.00 News Now

4.02 When We Play
5.00 News Now
7.02 Champions For Change
8.00 Primetime Asia
9.02 Insight
10.00 Singapore Tonight
11.02 Champions For Change
AM
12.00 News Now
12.30 India's Game Changers
1.02 Insight
2.00 News Now
2.30 Asia Exposed 2
3.02 When We Play
4.00 News Now
4.30 India's Game Changers
5.02 Insight

VASANTHAM

PM
3.00 Super Samayal 4 (IE)
3.30 Anjaraipetti 5 (IE)
4.00 Priyasakhi (D)
4.30 Vasantham Express 5 (IE)
5.30 Mighty Raju Animation Series (S)
6.00 Ishq Ka Rang Safed (PG) (D)
7.00 Konjam Soru Konjam Varalaru (CC) (IE)
7.30 Merdeka Generation – Hands That Shaped The Nation (IE)
8.00 Uyire (PG) (CC) (D)
8.30 Tamil Seithi (News)
9.00 Kanavu Meipada 2 (CC) (IE)
10.00 Rowthiram (PG13) (CC) (D)
10.30 Nijangal (PG) (CC) (D)
11.00 Maalai Maalai Vasantham (V)
11.30 Ethiroli 15 (HD) (CA)
AM
12.00 Tamil Seithi (News) (R)
12.30 Close

OKTO

AM
9.00 Justin Time (P)
9.30 Teddies (P)
10.00 Guess How Much I Love You (P)
10.30 Sesame Street (P)
11.00 Mouk (P)
11.30 Ready Jet Go! (P)
PM
12.00 Hiccup & Sneeze (P)
12.30 Teddies (P)

1.00 Rob The Robot (P)
1.30 Justin Time (P)
2.00 Guess How Much I Love You (P)
2.30 Sesame Street (P)
3.00 Mouk (P)
3.30 Ready Jet Go! (P)
4.00 Odd Squad (S)
4.30 Shutterbugs (S)
5.00 Littlest Pet Shop (HD) (S)
5.30 Marcus Level (S)
6.00 The New Powerpuff Girls (S)
6.30 Exlosers 2 (D)
7.00 My Little Pony: Friendship Is Magic (CC) (S)
7.30 Miraculous: Tales Of Ladybug & Cat Noir (CC) (S)
8.00 Turning Mecard (CC) (S)
8.30 Inazuma Eleven (CC) (S)
9.00 ITTF World Tour – Grand Finals 2018 (Sports) (Encore)
11.10 Battle Of The Network Stars (PG) (Sports)
AM
12.00 Close

SURIA

PM
4.00 Bibik-Bibikku (PG) (D)
5.00 Hilang Kasih Di Sarajevo (PG) (CC) (D)
6.00 Supa Strikas (S)
6.30 Masak-Masak Ringan (IE)
7.00 Maklum Yang Paling Aku Cinta (PG) (CC) (D)
8.00 Berita (News)
8.30 Sentuhan Harapan (PG) (CC) (IE)
9.30 Kultus (PG) (CC) (D)
10.30 Bingit (PG) (D)
11.30 Berita (News) (R)
AM
12.00 Close

C: Children; CA: Current Affairs;
CC: Closed Captions; Cul: Culture;
D: Drama; IE: Info-Ed; M: Movies;
P: Preschool; PG: Parental Guidance;
R: Repeat; S: Schoolkids; SC: Sitcom;
V: Variety

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TheStarsSay

Aries (March 21 - April 19)

Put aside selfish thoughts and give your all. Your energy is much better spent on others for now.

Taurus (April 20 - May 20)

Colleagues are fussing over something that does not seem like a big deal. Help them find a solution.

Gemini (May 21 - June 20)

Your love life is in a perfect groove. Put up a new profile or show your sweetie what it is really all about.

Cancer (June 21 - July 22)

Your partner needs attention. Make sure you block out time and emotional energy to deal with the issue.

Leo (July 23 - Aug 22)

You are on the lookout for a new gadget. Consider trading up a new phone or computer.

Virgo (Aug 23 - Sept 22)

Let others make the call. Your energy is better for going along with others.

Libra (Sept 23 - Oct 22)

You are capable of tackling the big issues. In fact, you will have enough energy left over for a date.

Scorpio (Oct 23 - Nov 21)

Pay attention to your inner voice and brush off social obligations in favour of some serious, deep thinking.

Sagittarius (Nov 22 - Dec 21)

Step up the party calendar and make sure that all your people are having as much silly fun as you are.

Capricorn (Dec 22 - Jan 19)

Your latest challenge is a big one. Call on your allies and other resources – it is all part of the game.

Aquarius (Jan 20 - Feb 18)

Your social energy and intellectual curiosity are peaking, so try new things to make the most of it.

Pisces (Feb 19 - March 20)

Deal with your financial situation in a new way. That could mean taking a new job.

• Provided by Astrology.com (www.astrology.com)

Radio

KISS92

AM
6.00 Maddy, Jason & Arnold In The Morning
10.00 Weekdays With Carol Smith
PM
1.00 Weekdays With Charmaine Yee
4.00 On The Drive Home With Shan Wee
8.00 Josh's Goodnight Kiss

ONE FM 91.3

AM
6.00 Glenn & The Flying Dutchman
10.00 The Midday Brew With Charmaine Phua
PM
1.00 Afternoon Tune Up With Cheryl Miles
4.00 The Weekday Getaway With Divian Nair
8.00 Love Songs With Simon Lim

MONEY FM 89.3

AM
6.00 The Breakfast Huddle With Elliott Danker & Finance Presenter Ryan Huang
10.00 Midday With Howie Lim
PM
2.00 Prime Time With Claressa Monteiro
4.00 The Curve With Michelle Martin & Bernard Lim

UFM100.3

AM
6.00 UFM100.3 Mornings With Wenhong, Limei & Xiaozhu
10.00 Lively Life With Kevin
PM
1.00 Tea With Yuling
4.00 Sing-a-long With Xinying & Weilong
8.00 Feel The Night With Chengyao

96.3 HAO FM

AM
6.00 Morning Drive Time With Jing Yun, De Ming And Jie Qi
10.00 Lunch Break With Anna
PM
1.00 Automation
4.00 Evening Drive Time With Li Yi And Guo Xian
8.00 Night Time With Wei Wen

Tides

SUN RISE/SET TIME: 7.16am/7.21pm
MOON RISE/SET TIME: 9.05pm/8.38am

TIDES TODAY: Singapore: 12.37am (3m), 6.15am (1.1m), 12.03pm (3.4m), 6.50pm (0.2m). Desaru: 12.15am (2.9m), 5.46am (1.5m), 11.26am (2.8m), 6pm (0.5m). Port Dickson: 2.45am (0m), 7.58am (2.8m), 3.09pm (0.1m), 8.32pm (2.9m). Mersing: 5.45am (1.6m), 10.57am (2.7m), 5.27pm (0.6m).

TIDES TOMORROW: Singapore: 1.11am (3m), 7.01am (1m), 12.52pm (3.4m), 7.37pm (0.3m). Desaru: 12.50am (2.9m), 6.26am (1.3m), 12.18pm (2.9m), 6.45pm (0.7m). Port Dickson: 3.29am (0m), 8.39am (2.7m), 3.41pm (0m), 9.08pm (2.9m). Mersing: 12.15am (3.3m), 6.25am (1.4m), 11.52am (2.8m), 6.13pm (0.7m).

For updates and more details, call Meteorological Service Singapore, NEA, on 6542-7788 or go to www.nea.gov.sg

StarHub TV

HISTORY (CHANNEL 401)

AM
8.00 Storage Wars 11
8.30 Swamp People 8
9.30 Ancient Aliens 10
10.25 History Drama: Project Blue Book
PM
12.15 The Curse Of Oak Island 4
1.10 America's War On Drugs
3.00 Storage Wars 11
3.30 History Drama: Project Blue Book
5.20 Hunting Hitler 2
6.15 Swamp People 8
7.10 Pawn Stars 18
8.05 Storage Wars 11
9.00 Forged In Fire 5
9.55 Forged In Fire: Knife Or Death
10.50 America's War On Drugs

LIFETIME (CHANNEL 514)

AM
8.00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16
9.00 Gok's Fill Your House For Free
10.00 Growing Up Supermodel
11.00 Up! Pretty
PM
12.00 Dance Moms 7
1.00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16
2.00 No One Would Tell
3.35 Married At First Sight Australia 4
5.00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16
6.00 Man Vs Child: Chef Showdown 2
7.00 This Time Next Year
8.00 Born This Way 2
9.00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16
10.00 A Killer Among Us
11.35 Man Vs Child: Chef Showdown 2

HBO (CHANNEL 601)

AM
8.05 Little Big League (PG)
10.00 Megamind (PG)
11.35 Master Of The White Crane Fist: Wong Yan-Lam (NC16)
PM
1.05 Dunkirk (PG)
2.50 True Detective 3 (NC16)
3.55 Mona Lisa Smile (PG)
5.50 The HBO Movie Show (PG)
6.15 The Jungle Book (PG)
8.00 Master Of The Nine Dragon Fist: Wong Ching-Ho (NC16)
9.45 Transformers: Revenge Of The Fallen (PG)

CINEMAX (CHANNEL 611)

AM
8.50 Batman: Gotham By Gaslight (NC16)
10.05 The Saint
PM
12.00 Looking Glass (NC16)
1.45 The Negotiator
4.00 Streets Of Fire
5.30 The HBO Movie Show

5.55 MacArthur
8.05 Hollywood Homicide (PG)
10.00 Strike Back 6 (NC16)
11.00 From Dusk Till Dawn 3: The Hangman's Daughter (M18)

HUB E CITY (CHANNEL 825)

AM
8.15 Hot Door Night 16 (HD)
9.15 Dowry (HD)
10.15 Chinese Restaurant 2 (HD)
PM
12.00 Still Loving You (HD)
1.15 Signal (HD)
2.45 Back To Youth (HD)
4.15 The Way To Wellness (HD)
4.45 Still Loving You (HD)
6.00 Dowry (HD)
7.00 Hot Door Night 16 (HD)
8.00 Super Boys 2 (HD)
9.30 Fun Abroad (HD)
10.00 Noble Aspirations (HD)
11.00 Hot Door Night 16 (HD)

HUB SPORTS 1 (CHANNEL 201)

AM
9.30 Tennis: ATP Champions Tour 2018
10.00 Tennis: Fed Cup By BNP Paribas 2019 First Round
11.00 Snooker: 2019 The Masters Highlights – Finals
PM
2.30 Spirit Of Yachting: 2018
3.00 Mountain Bike: Crankworx World Tour 2018: Les Gets Highlights
4.00 BMX Supercross 2017: Lane 1
5.00 Tennis: Deuce 2019
5.30 Tennis: ATP World Tour Uncovered 2019
6.00 Tennis: ATP 500 Rio Open Presented By Claro 2019

HUB SPORTS 2 (CHANNEL 202)

AM
6.30 Magazine: Omnisport.TV
7.00 Football: EFL Carabao Cup 2018 Semi-finals 1 Leg 1 Tottenham Hotspur Vs Chelsea
9.00 Magazine: Trans World Sport 2019
10.00 Football: Coppa Italia 2018/19 Quarter-finals Atalanta Vs Juventus
PM
12.00 Magazine: Omnisport.TV
12.30 Asean Basketball League 2018/19 Formosa Dreamers Vs Westports Malaysia Dragons
2.30 Football: EFL Carabao Cup 2018 Semi-finals 1 Leg 1 Tottenham Hotspur Vs Chelsea
4.30 Wrestling: WWE Raw (PG13)
7.00 Magazine: Omnisport.TV
7.30 Asean Basketball League 2018/19 Macau Black Bears Vs Hong Kong Eastern (Live)
9.30 Wrestling: WWE Smackdown (PG)
11.00 Fiba World Basketball 2019
11.30 Magazine: Omnisport.TV

Singtel TV

CARTOON NETWORK (CHANNEL 226)

AM
6.00 Oggy & The Cockroaches
7.00 The Tom And Jerry Show
8.00 Teen Titans Go!
9.00 Grizzy And The Lemmings
9.30 The Tom And Jerry Show
10.00 We Bare Bears
10.30 Supernooobs
11.00 The Powerpuff Girls
PM
12.00 Teen Titans Go!
1.00 We Bare Bears
2.00 Ninjago: Masters Of Spinjitzu
2.30 Craig Of The Creek
3.00 Rat-A-Tat
3.30 The Amazing World Of Gumball
4.00 We Bare Bears
4.30 The Powerpuff Girls
5.00 Teen Titans Go!
5.30 Craig Of The Creek
6.00 Ben 10 Challenge
6.30 Oggy & The Cockroaches
7.00 The Tom And Jerry Show
7.30 Grizzy And The Lemmings
7.55 The Heroic Quest Of The Valiant Prince Ivandoe
8.00 We Bare Bears
9.00 The Powerpuff Girls
10.00 Regular Show
10.30 Steven Universe
11.00 Clarence
11.30 Adventure Time

AXN (HD) (CHANNEL 304)

AM
6.00 Hawaii Five-O 7
6.50 Seal Team
7.40 American Ninja Warrior 7
9.20 Hawaii Five-O 7
10.10 Seal Team
11.00 The Amazing Race 30
PM
12.50 Criminal Minds: Suspect Behavior
1.40 American Ninja Warrior 7
2.30 Hawaii Five-O 7
3.25 Seal Team
4.20 The Amazing Race 30
6.10 Seal Team 2
7.05 Asia's Got Talent 3
10.00 MacGyver 3
10.55 Asia's Got Talent 3

WARNER TV (HD) (CHANNEL 306)

AM
6.00 Blindspot 3
6.50 Major Crimes 5
7.35 DC's Legends Of Tomorrow 3
8.20 Person Of Interest 4
9.10 The Flash 4
10.00 Blindspot 3
10.50 Almost Genius
11.40 Sucker Punch
PM
1.40 The Big Bang Theory 11
2.05 Friends 10
2.30 Blindspot 3

Lady Gaga splits with fiancé Christian Carino

LOS ANGELES • The missing ring was a big clue and amateur detectives – insistent that Bad Romance singer Lady Gaga had split up with fiancé Christian Carino – have been proven right.

A representative for the star has confirmed to People magazine that the duo have gone separate ways, just four months after Gaga herself

had revealed in October last year that they were engaged.

“It just didn’t work out. Relationships sometimes end,” the source said. “There’s no long dramatic story.”

The two started dating in 2017, after Gaga’s 2016 split from actor Taylor Kinney.

At an Elle’s Women In Hollywood

event in October, she had referred to Carino as her fiancé.

“Thank you to all the loved ones in my life,” Gaga, 32, said then.

“Everyone at table five. My fiancé, Christian. All the loved ones in my life who take care of me every day.”

The couple later raised their public profile, showing up together

at the 2019 Golden Globe and Screen Actors Guild award ceremonies.

But rumours of a break-up surfaced after Carino, 50, a talent agent, was seen with a brunette in a restaurant two days before Feb 10’s Grammy Awards.

Gaga turned up without Carino and her engagement ring.



Singer Lady Gaga and talent agent Christian Carino (both left) had shown up together at the Screen Actors Guild award ceremony earlier this year.

PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

She did not mention him in her speech when she won best pop duo/group performance for Shallow from the film, A Star Is Born.

She did not post photos of the two together on Valentine’s Day.

In recent weeks, some netizens have voiced their preference for her A Star Is Born co-star Bradley Cooper to win her heart, even

though he has a daughter with girlfriend Irina Shayk, a supermodel.

But, for now, faster relief for any heartache Gaga may have over parting ways with Carino could come in Sunday’s Academy Awards, where she is up for best actress for A Star Is Born and best original song for Shallow.

Ariana Grande sets record in singles chart

NEW YORK • Fans of pop princess Ariana Grande (right) can now twist and shout after she became the first act in more than 50 years to claim, simultaneously, the top three spots on the American singles chart.

The 25-year-old accomplished the feat achieved by The Beatles in 1964.

Grande’s 7 Rings, Break Up With Your Girlfriend, I’m Bored and Thank U, Next monopolised the chart, following her fifth album’s debut atop the Billboard chart.

The Beatles nabbed the same spots in April 1964 with Can’t Buy Me Love, Twist And Shout and Do You Want To Know A Secret, repelling all other chart rivals.

The all-genre Hot 100 blends US streaming, radio airplay and digital sales data to rank the top hits.

Grande also broke the record for most simultaneous top 40 hits by a female artist with 11 tracks, beating rapper Cardi B’s previous score of nine.

The pop star has seen runaway success over the past 12 months, with Billboard naming her its 2018 Woman of the Year.

This month, she scored her first Grammy for Best Pop Vocal Album



PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

for Sweetener, beating tough competition including perennial favourite Taylor Swift.

Grande was absent from the gala amid a spat with the show’s producer, but the social-media maven commanded attention throughout the evening with relentless posts, including one of a satin Zac Posen gown that she had planned to wear to the ceremony.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Anthology film cans Ai Weiwei’s segment



BEIJING • Chinese dissident artist Ai Weiwei (left) was under house arrest in Beijing when he was invited to remotely direct a segment for Berlin, I Love You, an anthology film set in the German capital.

The segment portrayed the separation of a family and featured his five-year-old son, who lived in Germany. “It’s sweet and has some sadness,” Ai said about his segment, which he directed in 2015. “Not politically sensitive at all.”

But in the final version of the film, which was released in the United States this month, his contribution was nowhere to be found.

The producers told him that investors, distributors and other partners had raised concerns about

his political sensitivity in China.

Starring Keira Knightley, Helen Mirren and Luke Wilson, Berlin, I Love You is part of the Cities Of Love franchise, in which international directors are invited to make short, intersecting vignettes that take place in a particular city.

Claus Clausen, one of the film’s producers who fought to keep Ai’s segment, said: “Some of the distributors just told us: ‘Frankly, we are not taking the movie with him in it.’”

“We were really, really desperate. No matter what decision we made, we were going to lose. In the end, we were heartbroken.”

Ai, who now lives in Berlin, has long been an outspoken critic of the Chinese government. He said he had become more concerned over the years that some Western governments, companies and organisations were apparently willing to engage in self-censorship in order not to offend China. NYTIMES

On social media

TAKE A BOW, KARL: “I wish I could give you one last hug,” supermodel Gigi Hadid posted online after news broke on Tuesday of the death of fashion icon Karl Lagerfeld. Other celebrities were also quick to share their memories of the 85-year-old.



KYLIE MINOGUE, SINGER: “I loved working with you. Unique, masterful, funny and generous.”



MILEY CYRUS, SINGER: “In recent years, we have and will continue to lose so many legends... We have to take responsibility... We have to do what pioneers like Karl would want us to do – make big impacts and change the world thru fashion! #NoFur #Sustainability #LoveOnly #NoShame #JustLove.”



NAOMI CAMPBELL, SUPERMODEL: “Karl, too many memories to write... (Thanks) for taking the chance on a 16-year-old girl from South London and opening my eyes. May you rest with the highest.”



LIU WEN, CHINESE SUPERMODEL: “I still remember when I walked the Chanel show the first time in 2008... We may all age and pass on from this world, but your artistic vision will never disappear.”

PHOTOS: KYLIE MINOGUE/INSTAGRAM, LIU WEN/INSTAGRAM, MILEY CYRUS/INSTAGRAM, NAOMI CAMPBELL/INSTAGRAM

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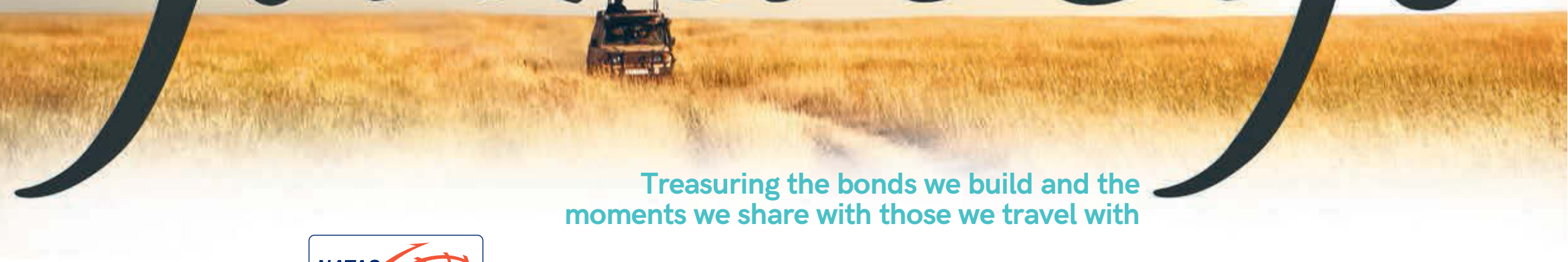


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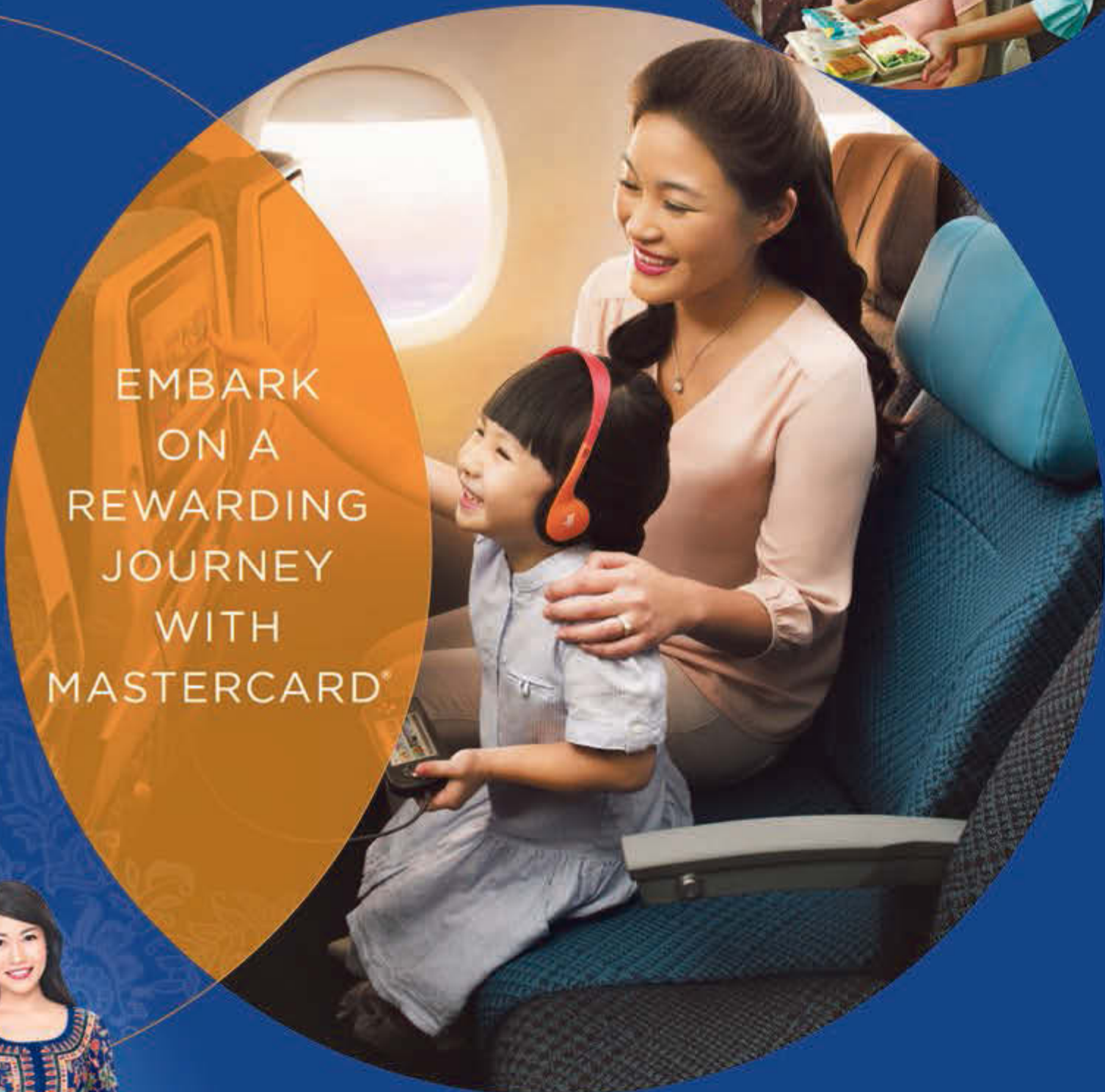


DESIGN: PRADIP KUMAR SIKDAR

When: Feb 22 to 24, 10am to 9.30pm Where: Singapore Expo, Halls 5 & 6A Admission: Free







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We

journey far and wide — with loved ones, with friends, with strangers, with ourselves.

We journey to our past, remembering adventures that have moulded us into who we are.

We journey to our future, creating stories we may one day live, and relive.

We journey to our todays, fortifying old bonds, and forging new ties.

We journey, and we hold on, to all that's precious to us.

We journey, and we hold on, to all that we should — should? — let go.

We journey — we run, we escape — to where we can, for a heartbeat, stand still.

Our journeys define us. May you, in this special issue, be inspired by journeys our writers have made. At the **Natas Travel 2019** fair, find a journey you can call your own, that will define who you are.

- Grace Sung

Singapore Expo (Halls 5 & 6A), Feb 22 to 24

Booth No.	Exhibitor
Attraction	
5H35	Resorts World Sentosa
Airlines	
5H12	Eithad Airways
5H30	Ethiopian Airlines
6H10	Royal Brunei Airlines
Cruises	
5H62	Citystate Cruises
5H45	Citystate Tours
5H54	Costa Cruises
6H13	Cruise Connexions
6H18	Dream Cruises
5H50	Royal Caribbean Cruises
5H55	Stamford Discovery Cruise Centre
Hotels/Resorts	
5H22	A'Famosa Resort Melaka, Malaysia
5H14	Hotel Puri Melaka
6H12	SG Luxe Collection
5H13	Vouk Hotel Management
Travel Agents	
5H05	Albatross World Travel & Tours Pte Ltd
5H08	Alternative Travel & Tours Pte Ltd
5H40	Apple Holidays Pte Ltd
5H67	Apple Vacations Singapore
5H70	ASA Holidays
5H28	Campers' Corner
5H41	Contiki — Trips for 18-to-35-year-olds
5H64	CS Travel Pte Ltd
5H63	CTC Travel
5H48	Dreamcation
6H01	Dynasty Travel
5H69	EU Asia Holidays
5H52	Euro-Asia Holidays
5H27	Famous World Tours
5H42	Farmosa Holiday Tour (S) Pte Ltd
5H38	Flying Eagle Travel (S) Pte Ltd

Booth No.	Exhibitor
Travel Agents	
5H20	Green Island Tours
6H15	H.I.S. Travel
5H49	Hong Thai Travel
5H29	Incredible Odyssey
5H25	Insight Vacations & Luxury Gold
5H36	Italy By Ergo: Travel
6H20	JTB
5H65	Jun-Air Travel Pte Ltd
5H58	Let's Go Europe
5H19	Nam Ho Travel
5H59	New Shan Travel
5H46	New Star Travel
5H66	PriceBreaker
5H37	S.M.I. Travel (S) Pte Ltd
5H57	Scenic Travel
5H31	STA Travel
6H17	Super Travels Group
5H09	THK Tour and Travel Pte Ltd
5H53	Trafalgar
5H51	Travel 21 (S) Pte Ltd
5H60	Travel Star Pte Ltd
5H43	Travelogix Pte Ltd
5H56	Universal Travel Corporation Pte Ltd
5H24	Uniwold Boutique River Cruise Collection
6H14	UOB Travel
6H16	WTS Travel
Tourism Organisations	
6H21	Japan National Tourism Organization
5H06	Korea Tourism Organization
5H61	Ministry of Tourism of the Republic of Indonesia
5H32	Perth, Western Australia
5H01	Sri Lanka Tourism Promotion Bureau
5H18	Takasaki City
5H17	Tokyo
5H68	Tourism Authority Of Thailand

Booth No.	Exhibitor
Tourism Organisations	
5H04	Tourism New Zealand
5H15	Welcome to Uzbekistan
Travel Related	
5H16	AIRSIM
5H26	Changi Recommends
5H07	Fei Fah
5H33	FotoHub
5H23	Motion Sickness Band
5H47	Photobook Express
5H02	Ready to Travel By SATS
5H10	Travel Guide Singapore
5H21	Wefly (Data Roaming SIM Card)
5H34	GOMO Travel SIM
5H03	Winter Time
5H11	YouTrip Travel Wallet
Staycations	
6H02	GTMC Travel Pte Ltd
6H03	Luxury Tours & Travel Pte Ltd
6H06	Siam Express Pte Ltd
6H07	Singapore Alive Pte Ltd
Banks	
B01	Citibank Singapore Limited
B02	HSBC Bank (Singapore) Limited
B03	Maybank
B04	UOB Cards
Official Travel Insurer	
6H19	Travel Guard By AIG
Sponsor	
6H22	Singapore Airlines Limited
Others	
-	Amadeus
-	Sabre Travel Network (Singapore)
6H11	Mercy Relief
5H39	96.3 HAO FM

sweet **CONTENT STRATEGY DIRECTOR** Grace Sung **STORYTELLING DIRECTORS** Tay Hwee Peng, Goh Hwee Koon **EDITOR** Michelle Chin **STORYTELLERS** Bryant Chan, Esther Teo, Luke Tan, Nivani Elangovan **CONTRIBUTORS** Carolyn Hong, Alan Yuen **ART DIRECTOR** Pradip Kumar Sikdar **ART AND DESIGN** Kimmie Tan, Sara Tan, Hsu Li, Brenda Wong, Ng Weng Chi **BUSINESS OPERATIONS MANAGER** Sumathi R Ramu **ADVERTISING SALES** Angeline Foo, Serene Tang, Veronica Chong, Jason Hoon, Delan Tay, Jasmine Lim, Wendy Wong (6319-2232). For editorial-related inquiries, e-mail sweetinfo@besweet.sg

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11/14D Romancing Central Europe (EUROPE14) - Ascend Mt Titlis by Rotor - Entrance to Eiffel Tower 2nd Level* Special Dep: Mar 12, 26 Apr 18, May 9, 13, 16, 23, 28 Jun 6, 9, 13, Sep 12, 26 Oct 3, 10 Dep: Apr-Oct 2nd Pax (EURO14) rs0 (1st Pax: \$5200)	11/13D Romancing Eastern Europe (EURO13) - Neuschwanstein Castle - Fussen* - Mozart's Birthplace - Salzburg* - McArthurGlen Designer Outlet Special Dep: May 12, 19, 26 Jun 1, 2, 9, 16, Oct 13, 27 Nov 17 Dep: May-Nov 2nd Pax (EURO13) rs0 (1st Pax: \$5200)	10D Romancing Italy (EURO10) - Visit Cinque Terre - Venice Island - Vatican City - Medieval hilltown of Spello Special Dep: May 14, Jun 4 Dep: May-Jun 2nd Pax (EURO10) rs0 (1st Pax: \$5200)	12/13D Best of Spain & Portugal + Gibraltar (EURO12) 3N Barcelona* • 2N Lisbon* 1N Porto • Park Guell • Bull Ring - St Michael's Cave • Ape's Den* - La Roca Village Shopping Clin Dep: Apr 4 Dep: Apr-Oct 2nd Pax (EURO12) rs0 (1st Pax: \$5200)	13D Romancing Croatia Slovenia Bosnia (EURO13) Ferry ride to Hvar Island • Visit Oyster farm include oyster tasting in Ston • McArthurGlen Designer Outlet Noventa Di Piave Shopping Special Dep: May 14, 21 Jun 4, Oct 16, 30, Nov 13, 20 Dep: May-Nov 2nd Pax (EURO13) rs0 (1st Pax: \$5200)
10D Best of Turkey (TURK10) - Experience stay Unique Cave Hotel • Whirling Dervishes & Turkish Belly Dancing Show - Visit UNESCO Heritage Sites: Hagia Sophia, Cotton Castle Dep: Mar-Oct 2nd Pax (TURK10) rs0 (1st Pax: \$5200)	6D Melbourne + Farm + Puffing Billy (AUS16) Farm Activities • Puffing Billy* • Penguin Parade • Chocolate Factory • A Maze 'N' Things • Healesville Wildlife Sanctuary* Dep: Apr-Oct 2nd Pax (AUS16) rs0 (1st Pax: \$5200)	6D Perth + Farmstay + Mandurah (AUS16) Fremantle Market* • Farm Activities • Canal Estuary Cruise* • Chocolate Shop • Local Winery • Nougat Factory* • Lake Clifton* Dep: Apr-Sep 2nd Pax (AUS16) rs0 (1st Pax: \$5200)	6D Best of Okinawa (JPN16) Cape Manza • Okashigoten • Okinawa Churaumi Aquarium • Nago Pineapple Park • Shuri Castle • Gyokusendo Cave Special Dep: Mar 31, Jun 9 Dep: Apr-Oct 2nd Pax (JPN16) rs0 (1st Pax: \$5200)	7D Best of Seoul (KOR17) Gyeongbok Palace with Hanbok Experience • Grevin Museum • Cheonggyecheon • Bibop Show • N Seoul Tower • Everland • Hot Spring Experience Dep: Mar-Mid Nov & Mar 2020 2nd Pax (KOR17) rs0 (1st Pax: \$5200)
8D Taiwan Explore Tour + Alisan (TWN18) 1N stay at Alisan Long Yun Farm 1N stay at S' Taichung Hot Spring Hotel 1N stay at Sun Moon Lake Dep: Apr-Dec 2019 & Jan-Mar 2020 2nd Pax (TWN18) rs0 (1st Pax: \$5200)	8D Joyful Taiwan (TWN18) 1N stay at Unique Theme Accommodation-Leefoo Resort Guanshi • 1N stay at Jiaoxi Hot Spring Resort Dep: Apr-Dec 2019 & Jan-Mar 2020 2nd Pax (TWN18) rs0 (1st Pax: \$5200)	6/8D Jiangnan Gastronomic Delights/Mt Huangshan + Qiandao Lake + Wuyuan (CHN16) Complimentary Tour* (Worth \$500) Dep: Mar 15, 19, Apr 12, 13, 19, 20 May 11, 17, 18-Dec (Every Fri, Sat) 2nd Pax (CHN16) rs0 (1st Pax: \$5200)	8D Kunming, Dali, Lijiang + Shangri-La/Dongchuan, Lugu Lake (CHN18) Shangri-La-Pudacuo National Park Clin Dep: Mar 3, 10, 24, Apr 14 Dep: Mar 17, 31, Apr 7, 21, May 12, 19, 26, Jun 2, 9, 16, 23, Jul-Dec 2nd Pax (CHN18) rs0 (1st Pax: \$5200)	8D Xi'an / Henan / Gannan Tibetan Area (CHN18) Upgraded 4N local 5* hotel Dep: Apr 6, 20, 22, May 4, 6, 18, 19 Jun 29, Jul 1, 15, 26, Aug 9, 18 Sep 7, 18, 21, 23, Oct 11, 18, 19 (Every Mon, Fri, Sat, Sun) 2nd Pax (CHN18) rs0 (1st Pax: \$5200)

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6/9D Best of Russia Yuzhno Sakhalinsk & Korea (KOR16) Okhotsk Seashore Special Dep: (6D) May 28, Jun 4, 11, 18, 25 Jul 2, Sep-Oct (9D) May 24, 31, Jun-Oct 2nd Pax (KOR16) rs198 (1st Pax: \$5200)	9D Seoul, Jeju + Busan (KOR19) Oozoo Starlight Garden • Foot bath Experience • Songdo Skywalk • Submarine & Nanta Show • Camellia Hill & Figure Museum Dep: Mar-Mid Nov & Mar 2020 2nd Pax (KOR19) rs650 (1st Pax: \$5200)	8D Scenic Korea (KOR18) Naganeupseong Folk Village • Metasequoia Street • Bukchon • Suncheon Bay Garden • Boseong Green Tea Farm Dep: Mar-Mid Nov & Mar 2020 2nd Pax (KOR18) rs458 (1st Pax: \$5200)	8D Eastern Taiwan Tour (TWN18) Domestic flight to Taiping • Enjoy scenic train • 2N accommodation at 5* Taiping Hot Spring Hotel & Hualien Hotel Dep: Apr-Dec 2019 & Jan-Mar 2020 2nd Pax (TWN18) rs598 (1st Pax: \$5200)	8D Awesome South Taiwan + Xiao Liu Qiu (TWN18) Relax on Xiao Liu Qiu, Taiwan's hidden gem • Visit natural marvels Special Dep: Apr 2, 16 May 28, Jun 11, Jul 16 Aug 13, 20, Sep 21, Oct 6 2nd Pax (TWN18) rs488 (1st Pax: \$5200)
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12D Best of Denmark Norway Sweden + Finland (EUR12) Flobanen Funicular to Mount Floyen Special Dep: May 20, Jun 10, Aug 5, Sep 9, Oct 7 Dep: Apr-Oct 2nd Pax (EUR12) rs2128 (1st Pax: \$5200)	6D Best of Dubai & Abu Dhabi (UAE16) Cruise on Dubai Creek • Middle Eastern Spice Market • Burj Al Arab Hotel • Jumeirah Mosque • Dubai Museum Dep: Mar-Nov 2nd Pax (UAE16) rs718 (1st Pax: \$5200)	11D Greece & Santorini + Mykonos (EUR11) Stay 2 Nights in Mykonos • Stay 4* hotels throughout • Acropolis • Meteora Monasteries Clin Dep: Apr 10, 25 Dep: Apr-Oct 2nd Pax (EUR11) rs1588 (1st Pax: \$5200)	11D Best of New Zealand + 3N Queenstown (NZ11) Waitomo Glowworm Grotto & boat ride • Hobbiton Movie Set Tour • Hangi Feast with Maori Cultural Show • Lake Taupo Huka Falls Dep: Apr-Sep 2nd Pax (NZ11) rs2468 (1st Pax: \$5200)	8D Best of Melbourne & Sydney (AUS18) 1 Night Stay in Port Stephens • Free photo taking with koala • Fruits Picking at Fruit Orchard* Clin Dep: Mar 15, 21 Dep: Mar-Oct 2nd Pax (AUS18) rs1088 (1st Pax: \$5200)
9/10D Russia (EUR9/10) Peterhof Palace • 85% Meals • Grand Kremlin Palace* • Learn to make Matryoshka Doll • Catherine Palace* Dep: Apr-Oct 2nd Pax (EUR9/10) rs1188 (1st Pax: \$5200)	13/14D Best of Eastern USA + Canada + Niagara Falls/ Mont Tremblant (CAN13/14) Lunch at Skyline Tower Autumn Dep: Sep 26, Oct 3, 10 Dep: Apr-Oct 2nd Pax (CAN13/14) rs2318 (1st Pax: \$5200)	11/12/13D Best of Western USA + Taipei* (US11/12/13) 4* Hotel Throughout • Yosemite • 17 Miles Scenic Drive & Grand Canyon National Park Dep: Apr-Nov 2nd Pax (US11/12/13) rs1998 (1st Pax: \$5200)	8D Mystic Mongolia Grassland & Beijing Tour (MNG8) Taregi National Park Dep: May 12, 18, 26 Jun 12, 5, 9, 16, 22, Jul 14, 28, Aug 4, 11, Sep 8 2nd Pax (MNG8) rs1688 (1st Pax: \$5200)	8D7N Happiness Bhutan & Nepal World Heritage Tour (BHN8/7N) UNESCO World Heritage Sites • Bhutanese Costumes Trying Special Dep: Jun 5, 13, 14 Dep: Jan-Dec 2nd Pax (BHN8/7N) rs1888 (1st Pax: \$5200)
8D DongBei Mt.Changbai / Red Beach Flora Tour (CHN8) 11D China's "Arctic Village" Mohe • Northern Lights (DTH)* Special Dep: Jun 18 Clin Dep: May 5, 12, 19 Sep 20, Oct 15, 22 2nd Pax (CHN8) rs648 (1st Pax: \$5200)	8/10D Authentic China Orient Express Silk Road (CHN8/10) Orient Express Western Style Deluxe Special Train Special Dep: May 26, 31, Sep 2, 7 2nd Pax (CHN8/10) rs2188 (1st Pax: \$5200)	8/9D Shandong Flower / Gourmet Tour (CHN8/9) No shopping • Direct flight to Qingdao • Mt. Taishan Clin Dep: Apr 11, 14, 16, 18, 19 Dep: Mar 16, 22, 23, May 10, Jun 28, Sep-Dec (Every Fri, Sat, Sun) 2nd Pax (CHN8/9) rs658 (1st Pax: \$5200)		

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5D Tasmania + Cradle Mountain (AUS5) rs798	4-10D New Zealand Self Drive (NZ4-10) rs888	6-13D Discover U.K. & Europe (EUR6-13) rs798	6-10D Russia Grand Tour (EUR6-10) rs988	3-5D Bangkok + Khao Yai/Chiang Mai (THA3-5) rs138
7-12D New Zealand Alpine Discovery (NZ7-12) rs1798	4-9D Florida Orlando Theme Park Fun (USA4-9) rs958	5-10D Iceland Midnight Sun/Aurora Hunting (ISL5-10) rs1168	8-10D Turkey/Jordan /Iran Wonder (TUR8-10) rs1488	4-7D Okinawa/Hokkaido /Kyushu Self-Drive (JPN4-7) rs388
4-6D Korea Chartered Car Travel (KOR4-6) rs488				

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10D7N Finland Winter Spectacular (EFINA/B)

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Confirmed Dep: Mar 8
Dep: Mar 15 Dec 3,4,6,8,10,12,13,14,18,20 Fr **\$4988***

12D9N Greece (With Mykonos & Santorini) (GMS12)

- Ancient Acropolis, Parthenon & Delphi • Birthplace of Western Civilization & Art • 2N Mykonos • walking tour of old town
- 3N Santorini with guided island tour to ancient sites, black & red beach, wine tasting, traditional village & romantic Oia town
- Domestic flight from Santorini to Athens

Confirmed Dep: Apr 8,15 May 18,24,29 Jun 4,11,12
Dep: Mar-Oct 2019 Fr **\$3588***

11D9N Wellington, Marlborough, Kaikoura & Mt Cook (NZW11)

- Explore the famous wine producing region - Marlborough
- Experience beautiful Autumn Colours
- Seafood Oymysea Cruise • Seafood Tasting
- 2N stay @ The Hermitage Hotel Mt Cook

Special Dep: Apr 26 Fr **\$5088***

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13/15D Italy, Switzerland & Paris (EROMS/EPROS)

- Entrance to Colosseum
- Ascend to Eiffel Tower Level 2
- More local meals • Mt Titlis excursion
- Visit enchanting Colmar

Confirmed Dep: Apr 15,27
Jun 8
Dep: Mar-Oct 2019 Fr **\$3288***

10D7N Jewels of Bavaria & Austria (EMUCSW)

- Ascend to the 'Top of Germany' - Zugspitze
- Visit the fairytale like Neuschwanstein Castle

Confirmed Dep: May 1
Dep: Mar-Oct 2019 Fr **\$3188***

11D8N Treasures of Croatia & Slovenia (EDOVWS)

- Experience truffle-hunting with truffle lunch
- Tour the spectacular Plitvice National Park

Confirmed Dep: Mar 19
Apr 23 May 5,18 Jun 2,16
Dep: Mar-Oct 2019 Fr **\$2888***

11D8N Best of Russia (EDMES)

- Tour Kolomenskoye Estate
- Make your own Russian Dolls
- Have tea with local family

Confirmed Dep: Apr 21
May 19,26 Jun 9 Sep 22
Dep: Mar-Oct 2019 Fr **\$3788***

EXOTICS & AFRICA
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12/13D Amazing Turkey (TUH12/13)

- 2N in Istanbul with Bosphorus River Cruise
- 3N Cappadocia with Ballooning and hot air balloon
- Visit the 'Middle of the World'
- Close encounter with 100 year-old giant tortoises and other wildlife
- Ride the Devil's Nose Train

Confirmed Dep: Mar 7, 14,29 Apr 4,10,25 May 9,20 Jun 12 Oct 3
Dep: Mar-Oct 2019 Fr **\$1788***

10/13'D Turkey & The Blue Riviera (TUK10/13)

- Ancient marble city, House of Virgin Mary, Mysterious Underground Cities & Rock-cut Churches

Confirmed Dep: Mar 8
Apr 5,12 Jun 5
Dep: Mar-Oct 2019 Fr **\$1338***

11D8N Amazing Georgia (GEO11)

- Visit Varzuga Cave Town, Kakheti (Javan & the Golden Fleece) and Gori (Birthplace of Joseph Stalin) & Shantladz
- Full board tour including wine tasting

Confirmed Dep: Jun 8
Dep: Apr-Oct 2019 Fr **\$3188***

12/16'D Azerbaijan/Georgia & Armenia (AGA12/16)

- Explore the best of southern Caucasus countries - historical and heritage sites, ancient monasteries & heavenly landscape of Europe's highest mountain

Confirmed Dep: Apr 27
Dep: Apr-Oct 2019 Fr **\$4588***

12D9N/16D13N Grand Tour of Balkans (BTP12/16)

- Explore old towns, bazars, buildings and citadels of Ottoman influence
- Visit Praga and Old Lake, Isle of Sveti Stefan and Biogradski Gor National Park
- Tour Bolivia's salt plains

Confirmed Dep: Mar 16
Dep: Mar-Oct 2019 Fr **\$19888***

AUSTRALIA & NZ
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7D5N Young Explorer Escapade to Melbourne (AMEE7)

- Unique itinerary where parents & children get to experience different tour activities
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May 10 Fr **\$2988***

5D4N Amazing Broome (ABMES)

- See the amazing 'Staircase to the Moon'
- Sunset Camel Ride
- Smashin' Dolphin Eco Tour
- Willie Creek Pearl Farm Tour

Special Charter Dep: Jun 13 & 20
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7D5N Best of Vivid Sydney (ANV7)

- 3N stay at Solihel Northworth Sydney
- Port Stephens Dolphin Watch Cruise
- Vivid Sydney Harbour Cruise
- Barramundi Farm Tour

Dep: Jun 4 Fr **\$2388***

8D6N Highlights of Gold Coast & Melbourne (AGCMS)

- Movie World
- Paradise Country Farm Experience
- Harbour Town Shopping
- Sea World

Dep: Mar-Sep 2019 Fr **\$2388***

8D6N Tasmania, Nature and Wildlife (ATAS8)

- Currigbar Farm Experience
- 1N stay in Cradle Mountain National Park

Dep: Mar-Sep 2019 Fr **\$3288***

11D9N New Zealand Highlights + Farmstay (NZH11)

- To Paia • To Po (Indigenous evening performances)
- Hobbiton Movie Set Tour • Lunch

Confirmed Dep: Mar 16
May 10
Dep: Mar-Sep 2019 Fr **\$4538***

9D7N Southern Alpine Wonders (NCHCS)

- Earth & Sky Cowan's Observatory
- Star Gazing
- Overnight stay @ Peppers Bluewater Lake Tekapo

Dep: Mar-Sep 2019 Fr **\$3838***

13D11N Best of New Zealand (NZB13)

- Cape Kidnappers Gannet Safari Tour
- To Paia • To Po (Indigenous evening cultural performances)

Dep: Mar-Sep 2019 Fr **\$5338***

8D6N Melbourne & Sydney Indulgence (ANSE8)

- Penguin Parade PLUS viewing platform
- Warwick Cattle Farm

Dep: Mar-Sep 2019 Fr **\$2688***

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8D6N Melbourne + Regional Farm Gate Trails

- 8N accommodations in Victoria
- Entrance to Penguin Parade PLUS
- Kaala Conservation Centre & Churchill Heritage Farm
- Entrance • Transfer Tour @ Rayners Stone Fruit Orchard
- 3D Hertz car Rental based on 1.6L Toyota Corolla
- 1 way SIC transfer from hotel to Melbourne Airport

Fr **\$1388***

9D7N Tasmania Food & Nature Trails

- 5N Innkeepers Hotel Pass
- 1N accommodation in Cradle Mountain
- 1N Farmstay in Currigbar Farm
- Entrance to Port Arthur Historic Site
- Entrance to Benbow Wildlife Sanctuary
- 8D Hertz Rental based on 1.6L Toyota Corolla

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8D7N Glacier & Coastal Wonder

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9D8N Scenic Splendour

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Belly full of memories

Alan Yuen bonds with his father over their love for food as they savour the delights of Sydney's culinary scene

For Dad and me, food is an integral part of travel. The most vivid memories of our holidays are of amazing meals. Dad introduced me to new foods wherever we went, challenging me to venture beyond my comfort zone. Food is our language of bonding. In fact, our frequent subject of conversation, even when we are not eating, centres on food. We would be discussing where to go next for our next bite or recounting delicious memories of past meals. For all our adventures together that made my childhood so wonderfully memorable, I was eager to return the favour and take Dad on an unforgettable trip. The destination I picked: Sydney in Australia.

Glorious memories of food
I remember the taste of oysters when I first visited Sydney in 2009. It was at Doyle's, a popular seafood joint at the Sydney Fish Market. The oyster's slimy texture almost made me gag, and the tentative sips of wine I was allowed to have did not help either. But this time last year, Dad and I were gobbling up the oysters plucked from the Tasmanian coast. And we washed that down with white wine. Between slurps and sips, we reminisced about our family holidays — and the memorable meals we have had on the trips.

Above: My dad used to introduce me to new foods on our holidays, but this time, I returned the favour during our trip to Sydney.

Right: We enjoyed fresh oysters from the Tasmanian coast in between sips of white wine.

PHOTOS: ALAN YUEN



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2nd Purchase From \$238*

• With purchase of any tour, second purchase of either China, Taiwan or Korea land tours will be priced from \$238* onwards
• Not valid to be used in conjunction with other travel vouchers.
• Other T&Cs apply.

TRAVEL INSURANCE
UP TO 35% OFF

*New bookings only *T&Cs apply
*Selected travel insurance only

Customer Rewards
BONUS REBATES*

Customers born on 2nd March are entitled to bonus rebates amounting to their respective age

*New bookings only *While Stocks Last *T&Cs apply

10/14D Eastern Europe Wonder/Highlight (EU10E14E)
• Hallstatt (UNESCO)
• Oswiecim Concentration Camp
Dep: Apr - Sep 1st pax fr\$4576

10/12D Best/Jewel of Turkey (TR10B12J)
• Visit Cumalikizik Village to see the authentic Turkish village
Dep: Mar - Oct 2nd pax fr\$1998
1st pax fr\$1998

7D Central Japan Gateway + 2N HKG F&E (JP7C12A)
• Experience make your own Tokyo (Japan's Beach), Cup Noodles 2nd pax fr\$0
Dep: Mar - Sep 1st pax fr\$4388

12/14D HOLA! Spain, Portugal & Gibraltar (EU12P14S)
• Shrine of Fatima
• Gibraltar - Most Southern Point of Europe
Dep: Mar - Sep 1st pax fr\$4176

8D Korea Autumn Splendour (KR8A)
• Bulguksa Temple (UNESCO)
• Visit Naengsan National Park
• Seoul Sky Park
Special Dep: May 11, 21, 26, 31
2nd pax fr\$0
1st pax fr\$1788

8D All Taiwan (TW8A)
• 1N Stay Inside Toroko National Park Silk Place
• Taroko 5* Hotel + International buffet dinner
Dep: Mar - Sep 1st pax fr\$1788

12/13D "Hvala" Fabulous Balkan (EU12B13D)
• Plitvice Lakes National Park + Mostar (UNESCO)
• Lake Blud + St Mary's Church, Blud Castle
Dep: Apr - Oct 1st pax fr\$4576

8D7N Hidden Gems Korea (KR8D7N)
• "Busan Air Cruise" Cable Car with Crystal Cruise
• Fruit Picking Experience - Apple-Watermelon
Dep: Apr - Oct 1st pax fr\$2888

8D Western Taiwan + Alishan (TW8D)
• Get chance for farm stay and farm activities
• Visit to Alishan National Park
Dep: Mar - Sep 1st pax fr\$1988

6D Perth, Pinnacles & Farm Stay (AU6P)
• Caversham Wildlife Park
• Pinnacles Desert
• Farm Stay Experience and Activities
• Sand Boarding Adventure
Dep: Apr - Sep Fr\$1688

8D Central Japan Family Fantasia (JP8C)
• Explore Japan's little Kyoto of Hida - Takayama Old Town
• A must see UNESCO World Heritage Site - Shirakawa-go
Dep: Mar - Sep Fr\$2588

8/11D Amazing New Zealand (NZ8D11A)
• Walter Peak High Country Farm
• TSS Earnslaw Vintage Steamship
Dep: Apr - Sep Fr\$3188

7D Wonderful Melbourne (AU7M)
• Sovereign Hill
• Rayner's Stone Fruit Orchard
Dep: Apr - Sep Fr\$1738

7/8D Hokkaido Delight (JP7D8H)
• Enjoy a view with three star rating in Michelin Green Guide Japan - Mount Hakodate
• View of Seasonal Flower Furano Tomita Farm
Dep: Mar - Sep Fr\$2388

8D Taiwan Family Fun (TW8D)
• Enjoy Hot Spring Resort (Experience & Spa and Adventure Themed Hotel stay)
• Seasonal Fruits Picking and Pineapple Tart DIY experience
Dep: Mar - Sep Fr\$688

8D6N Awesome Sydney & Melbourne (AU8D6N)
• Overnight in Hunter Valley
• 2 Nights stay in Sydney City
Dep: Apr - Sep Fr\$1988

7/8D Tatemaya Kurobe Alpine Route (JP7D8T)
• Experience 6 different types of vehicles to complete the "Tatemaya Kurobe Alpine Route"
• Enjoy the Snow Corridor Walk
Dep: Apr - Sep Fr\$2388

COUPLE DISCOUNT UP TO \$2600*

WAIVE OFF TRAVEL TAXES*

6/8D Guangxi Nanning/Jingxi Canyon/Dejian + Bama Longevity Village (CN6G8D)
Dep: Mar - Oct 1st pax fr\$1398

8/9D Mt. Putuo/Mt. Niushow + Mt. Langya (CN8P9D)
• Mt. Putuo: One of the Four Sacred Buddhist Mountains of China
• Chuzhou Langya Mountain
Dep: Mar - Oct 2nd pax fr\$1398
1st pax fr\$1398

5/6D Meet at Hainan (CN5H6D)
• Nanshan Cultural Tourism Zone - 108m Statue of Kwan - yin Bodhisattva
• Special Dep: May 17, Oct 25
Dep: Mar - Dec 2nd pax fr\$0
1st pax fr\$699

6/7/8D Xiamen/Chaoshan/Yongding/Meizhou + Mt. Wuyi Tianyuan Peak (CN6X78D)
Dep: Mar - Dec 2nd pax fr\$1296
1st pax fr\$1296

8D Marvelous Ningxia/Yinchuan + Zhongwei + Guyuan (CN8D)
• Shapotou: one of the five most beautiful deserts in China
• Special Dep: Mar 15, 22
Dep: Mar - Jun 2nd pax fr\$1398
1st pax fr\$1398

5/7D Chiangmai /Chiangrai + Bangkok Free & Easy (TH5C7D)
• Seven wonders of Thailand - White Temple
• DMae SA Elephant Camp
Dep: Mar - Oct 2nd pax fr\$0
1st pax fr\$1398

10/12/14D Value of Central Europe (EU101214C)
• Visits to "Viva La Romance" TV Show Highlights
• Most Comprehensive Itinerary
Dep: Apr - Oct Fr\$2588

8D Enchanting of Hiroshima + Shikoku (JP8D)
• Experience make your own: Okonomiyaki, Grilled Bonito, Pearl Cultivation
Dep: Mar - Sep Fr\$2488

8D Kunming/Dali/Lijiang + Shangri-La/Lugu Lake (CN8D)
• Enjoy cable car ride to the top of Jade Dragon Snow Mountain
• Special Dep: Mar 18, 21
Dep: Mar - Jun 2nd pax fr\$799
1st pax fr\$799

8 Days Unique of Taiwan (TW8A)
• Visit Hakka Round House
• Special Arrange to visit Lavender Farm
• Stroll along at Beipu Old Street
• Experience DIY Hakka Leicha
Special Dep: Apr 28 Fr\$888

8 Days Tatemaya Kurobe Alpine Route (JP8D)
• Experience 6 different types of vehicles to complete Alpine Route
• View of vast fields at Pink Moss with Mt. Fuji in backdrop
• View of colourful Wisteria at Ashikaga Flower Park
Special Dep: May 7, 8 Fr\$2488

8 Days Romantic Korea + Jeju (KR8D)
• Best 3 Cities for Cherry Blossoms Festival - Jeju, Jinhae, Yeosu
• Jeonju Hanok Village + Hanbok Wearing
• Gokseong Train Village
Special Dep: Apr 1, 2, 3, 4 Fr\$1688

7/8 Days Inner Mongolia + Shanxi/Ningxia (CN78D)
• Discover vast grassland and Mongolian culture
• Singing Sand Ravine, one of three well-known deserts in China
• Cfm Dep: May 18, Jun 8, Aug 10
Dep: May - Sep 2019 Fr\$899

8/9 Days Gannan Zhagana/Zoige Flower Lake/Guanghe (CN8G9D)
• Zoige flower Lake Scenic Area, is a sapphire inlaid on the grassland, floating in the golden glory, a mile, and a red grass on the shore of the lake.
• Zhagana, a complete natural "stone city".
Dep: May - Oct 2019 Fr\$799

10 Days Mohe/Arctic Village + Hulunbuir Grassland (CN10D)
• Wudalianchi Geopark - the "Natural Volcano Museum"
• Arctic Village - the most Northern county of China
• Shenyang Grottoes Slope
Dep: May - Oct Fr\$998

10D Finland & Norway Aurora Experience (EU10D)
• 100% Lights Hunting Chances
• Guaranteed Dep: Mar 7
Dep: Nov 2019 - Mar 2020 Fr\$3688

10D Colors of Italy (EU10D)
• Milan/Venice/Pisa/Florence/Vatican City/Rome
• Florence Duomo
• Venice St. Mark Square
Dep: Apr - Oct 2019 Fr\$2188

10D Treasures of Russia (EU10D)
• Scenic Speed Train Experience
• 100% Meals Coverage
• Vodka Museum
Guaranteed Dep: Apr 20
Dep: Apr - Oct 2019 Fr\$2988

7/8D Bountiful Floral Hokkaido (JP7D8H)
• Aomori
• Enjoy an afternoon tea in Otaru
• View of Seasonal Flowers in Furano Tomita Farm
Dep: Mar - Sep 2019 Fr\$2388

8D Korea Autumn Splendour (KR8D)
• Wearing the traditional confucian clothes & making the Korean Book
Dep: Mar - Sep 2019 Fr\$1388

6D Ultimate Sydney (Vivid Sydney) (AU6D)
• Townhouse Wildlife Park
• Warner Bros. Movie World
• Paradise Jet Boat
Dep: Apr - Sep 2019 Fr\$1488

10/12/13D Tibet-Qinghai Railway + Lyingchi/Mt. Everest (CN101213D)
Dep: Apr 12, 17, May 1, 13, 2019 Fr\$1288

8/10D Shandong Flower Festival + Tai'erzhuan Ancient Town/Henan Peony (CN8D10A)
Special Dep: Apr 10, 14, 17, 19, 21
Dep: Apr - Oct 2019 Fr\$799

8D Scenic Guilin Yangshuo + Guangzhou (CN8D)
Promo Dep: Apr 6, May 4, 11, 18, 25, 29, Jun 5, 12, 19, 26, 30, 2019 Fr\$999

12D Scenic Scandinavia & Fjord (EU12D)
• Denmark's Northernmost Point
• Atlantic Ocean Road
• Overnight Cruise Experience
Dep: Apr - Oct 2019 Fr\$3388

9D Best of Iceland (EU9D)
• Jokulsarlon Glacier Lagoon
• Reynisfjara Beach
• Guiffoss & Skagafos Waterfall
• Green House & Iceland Horses
Dep: Jun - Oct 2019 Fr\$3988

10D The Magical Greek Islands (GR10D)
• Discover the beauty of Zakynthos Island
• Island-hopping between Mykonos & Santorini
Dep: Apr - Sep 2019 Fr\$2788

5D Beauty of Okinawa (JP5D)
• Local Life Experience
• Walk Through The Longest Limestone Cave
Dep: Mar - Sep 2019 Fr\$1988

8D Best of Kyushu (JP8D)
• Experience Hot Sand Bath
• Visit natural of Takachiho Gorge
Dep: Mar - Sep 2019 Fr\$2488

8D Mysterious of Wakayama + Mie (JP8D)
• Enjoy the fine flavor of char-grilled local fresh seafood prepared by Ama (Female Pearl Diver)
Dep: Mar - Sep 2019 Fr\$2488

8D Colourful Korea (KR8D)
• Gamcheon Culture Village
• Jeonju Hanok Village Hanbok Wearing
Dep: Mar 23, 26, Apr 9, 11, 16, 23, 30, May 2, 7, 9, 21, 25, 28, Jun 1, 4, 6, 11, 12, 18, 25 - Oct 2019 Fr\$888

8D Classic Korea + Jeju (KR8D)
• Ocean Rail Bike Experience
Dep: Mar 23, 26, Apr 9, 11, 16, 23, 30, May 2, 7, 9, 21, 25, 28, Jun 1, 4, 6, 11, 12, 18, 25 - Oct 2019 Fr\$888

8D Amazing Taitung + Hualien (TW8D)
• Taking domestic flight to lesser coaching's time
• Visit Hualien Taroko National Park and Qingting
Dep: Mar - Sep 2019 Fr\$1298

10D Discovery of Tohoku (JP10D)
• Visit one of the most beautiful Ginzan Hot Spring Town
Dep: Mar - Sep 2019 Fr\$2488

8D6N Enchanting of Hiroshima + Shikoku (JP8D6N)
• See the very kind of onion towels at Towel Museum Ichihiro
• Visit Japan's oldest onsen hot spring - Dogo Onsen Honkan
Dep: Mar - Sep 2019 Fr\$2488

7D Taiwan Leisure Fun (TW7D)
• Stroll along Taiwan's Number One Street - Anping old Street
• Enjoy the SPA and facilities in resort
Dep: Mar - Sep 2019 Fr\$688

10D Finland & Norway Aurora Experience (EU10D)
• 100% Lights Hunting Chances
• Guaranteed Dep: Mar 7
Dep: Nov 2019 - Mar 2020 Fr\$3688

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Dep: Nov 2019 - Mar 2020 Fr\$3688

10D Colors of Italy (EU10D)<



I hit jackpot with Firedoor, where my dad declared his steak — marbled Angus ribeye that was dry-aged for 192 days — as the best meal of the year.
 PHOTOS: ALAN YUEN



Today, we still remember the beautiful sound of the crackling as we took our first bite, sinking our teeth into the tender meat under the crispy skin. But since this Sydney trip was the first holiday I planned, I wanted a meal that would trump that pork knuckle. So I scoured the web for restaurants to take Dad to, hoping to find a new place we can rave about for years to come.

The perfect grill

I narrowed my options to Firedoor because at the helm of the kitchen is Chef Lennox Hastie, who spent five years mentoring at Asador Etxebarri in the Basque Country.

Asador Etxebarri, which has been voted into 10 editions of The World's 50 Best Restaurants, has always been high up on our foodie bucket lists. When I told Dad about Firedoor, his eyes lit up.

At Firedoor, we were seated facing the open kitchen — front row seats to the chefs at work. The heat was palpable. Less than three metres away were burning logs over which most dishes were cooked.

Everything was grilled to perfection. We nodded in unison as we savoured mouthfuls of an incredibly gelatinous Murray cod head, and squid served with charred green tomatoes and squid ink sauce.

But the winner was the beef. Chef Hastie's pièce de résistance is a rare breed of Angus ribeye — prized for its high levels of marbling — that had been dry-aged for 192 days.

The steak, seasoned with nothing more than salt, was easily the best piece of meat I have tasted.

As Dad and I relished our meal in silence, I could sense that he enjoyed it as much as I did.

Sure enough, when he found his voice again, he declared: "This is easily the best meal of the year."

The writer's trip was sponsored by Singapore Airlines and Destination New South Wales.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

Belly full of memories

As we explored Sydney's streets, our conversation gravitated towards the pork knuckle we had in Germany two years ago.

We had gone to Rothenburg in the Franconia region of Bavaria during our first father-and-son trip. I recalled ordering pork knuckle from the first eatery we chanced upon as we were very hungry. I thought it looked like a typical tourist trap so I did not expect the food to be outstanding. But surprisingly, the pork knuckle was mind-blowingly good.

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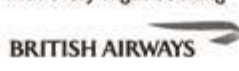
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BROUGHT TO YOU BY SINGAPORE AIRLINES AND VISIT CANBERRA

Australia's capital has an interesting food scene waiting to be discovered

Culinary adventures in Canberra

BY BALVINDER SANDHU

Looking for a winter getaway during the June school holidays? Why not consider Canberra, which was listed by Lonely Planet as the third best city to visit in 2018.

Canberra offers unique foodie adventures waiting to be explored and suited for the whole family. With daily flights on Singapore Airlines, it is always easy to plan a trip there.

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Just make sure you leave some room for award-winning food experiences to be discovered in Canberra.



The Truffle Festival – Canberra Region

Winter is also the season for truffle harvesting in Australia. The black truffles (below, left) grown around Canberra are also known as Perigord or French truffles.

The Truffle Festival – Canberra Region, held during the winter months from June to August, offers the perfect opportunity to learn all you have ever wanted to know about the intensively flavoured fungi that has taken the culinary world by storm.

Join a truffle hunt and see truffle dogs in action as they follow their noses and unearth these "black diamonds", buy some truffle from the growers' or the local farmers' markets, or sample truffle creations at restaurants and cafés.

Pick up a local wine or two

Canberra's wine region is home to 140 vineyards and more than 30 cellars. Head to Four Winds Vineyard which offers Shiraz, Riesling, Cabernet and Sangiovese, as well as scrumptious wood-fired pizzas.

If you are looking for something different, try biodynamic wines at Lark Hill Winery. Harvested through biodynamic farming, an alternative form of agriculture similar to organic farming, the wines are made without manipulation or



chemical adjustment, but allowed to age naturally. Visit the cellar door for the Riesling, Pinot Noir, Viognier, Sangiovese and Shiraz.

Capital Region Farmers Market

At the largest regional markets in the Southern Tablelands, you will get honey that is still warm from the hive and potatoes that still have dirt on them — signs that the goods are as fresh as they can be. There are more than 100 stalls selling a wide range of fresh produce like fruits, vegetables, flowers, baked goods, meats and cheeses. The market operates every Saturday, from 7.30am to 12pm.

Other foodie delights

Be spoilt for choice when looking for dining options in Canberra. Just a few minutes' walk from the city centre is Braddon, a hip neighbourhood and foodie precinct that offers a range of exciting cafés, restaurants and bars. The must-try eateries in the area include Sage Dining Rooms, the Elk & Pea and eightysix (above).

At the New Acton precinct, also near the city centre, try Parlour Wine Room for tapas, cocktails and local Canberra wine, or Monster Kitchen and Bar for breakfast and all-day dining.

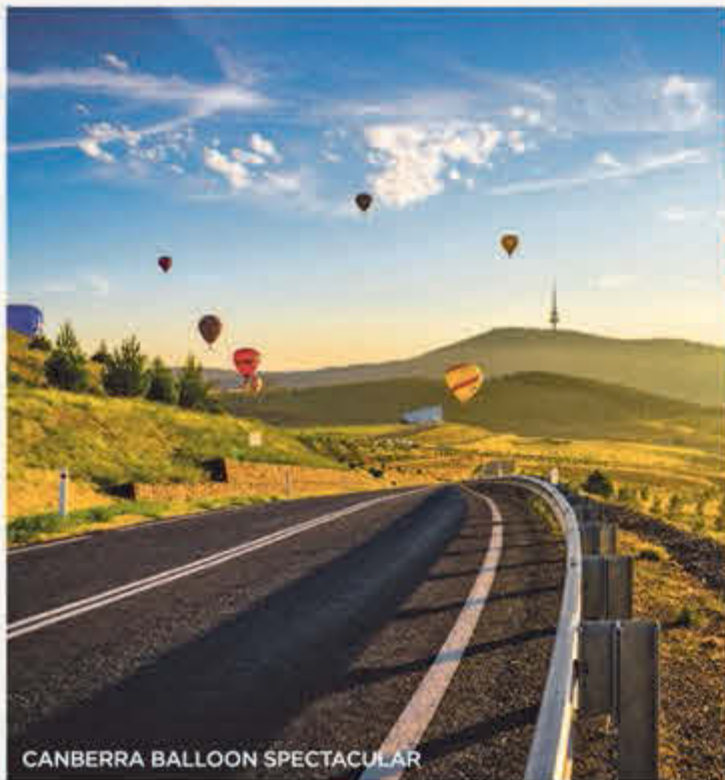
Canberra's City Centre, also known as the Civic precinct, offers many good options. They include Raku for modern Japanese, Sammy's Kitchen for Chinese, and Akiba for Asian fusion flavours and buzzing atmosphere.

The Capital Region Farmers Market offers a wide range of fresh produce.

PHOTOS: VISIT CANBERRA

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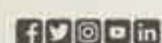
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Snapshot in time

The journeys we make are sometimes real, oftentimes illusory. The experiences, regardless, are enriching. Here, Sweet writers share their imaginary voyages to iconic destinations.



Giza in Egypt

It had been a great trip. As we left Giza, our professor mentioned the curse that struck anyone who removed something from a Pharaoh's tomb. Radiation, bacteria or dumb coincidence — but the fact was, people had died.

Cue nervous laughter all around. At the back of the bus, somebody coughed.

That night, we were all coughing. This morning, I discovered the rock in my shoe.

JOSHUA WONG



PHOTOS: ISTOCK

Mount Fuji in Japan

It's 2039.

My husband and I have retired from our full-time jobs even though Singapore's minimum retirement age is 70. It was 62 in 2019, but raised to 67 in 2022 and 70 in 2030.

We are still working on freelance projects, but the jobs landscape has changed drastically since we entered the workforce in the late 1990s.

We first visited Mount Fuji during our honeymoon in September 2003. Our daughter was born three years later.

This is our second time here. And it's autumn again.

TAY HWEE PENG

CONTINUED ON PAGE 22

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The Waitomo Glowworm Caves boast a species unique to New Zealand.

PHOTOS: TOURISM NEW ZEALAND

Feel the warm embrace of Rotorua's geothermal wonders.

BY LUKE TAN

*"Still round the corner there may wait
A new road or a secret gate,
And though I oft have passed them by,
A day will come at last when I
Shall take the hidden paths that run
West of the Moon, East of the Sun."*

When actor Elijah Wood, in his portrayal of Hobbit character Frodo Baggins, first sang this song under the pen of J.R.R. Tolkien, both could not have foreseen the enduring appeal of the Lord of the Rings stories and how it propelled New Zealand into one of the world's top tourist destinations.

And while the Hobbiton Movie Set in Waikato should certainly be on the list of any first-time traveller to New Zealand, the country has many more less trodden paths and secret gates to be explored.

Discover new adventures between the moon and sun in the Land of the Long White Cloud as we bring to you the highlights of Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch.

For the family: Auckland

If you've always thought that Auckland is just a bustling city in the north of New Zealand's North Island, think again. Auckland is a hub for new educational experiences for the whole family.

A four-hour coach ride away lies Rotorua, home to geothermal wonders dating back two million years. At the Taupo Volcanic Zone, crater lakes, spouting geysers and bubbling mud pools at parks like Wai-O-Tapu will enthrall kids no end. Hell's Gate is another geothermal attraction, offering a heavenly spa experience with its splattering mud pits and sulphur waters.

A five-minute drive away from the centre of Rotorua is the 100-year-old Whakarewarewa Forest, dubbed "the Redwoods" for its California redwood trees. This 5,600-hectare paradise offers scenic trails for hikers, mountain bikers and even those on horseback. Children can try out orienteering courses, junior explorer trails, and obtain discovery packs from the Information Centre.

The Waitomo Glowworm Caves, under three hours from Auckland by coach, are a must-see for the whole family. Be amazed by natural rock formations from the Catacombs to the imposing 18-metre high Cathedral, a performance venue that has been graced by famed singers including New Zealand soprano Dame Kiri Te Kanawa. The real highlight, however, is the boat ride along the subterranean Waitomo River during which you will pass



through a 250m limestone cave system where thousands of glowworm larvae light up the cave roof like a star-studded sky. It is a mesmerising experience not to be missed.

For friends: Wellington

New Zealand's capital is a great starting point for friends seeking unusual adventures. Try spending a night under the stars in Wairarapa (two hours by train from Wellington), site of Stonehenge Aotearoa which is not only a top-rated stargazing site, but also a historic site offering a window into the secrets of lost civilisations.

If wine is the ultimate social lubricant, the chance for some quality bonding time with your pals is just a ferry or a coach ride away. From Picton, hop on an Interislander or Bluebridge ferry en route to Marlborough (40 minutes' drive from Picton), or take the coach to Nelson, a two-and-a-half-hour drive away. Marlborough and Nelson are home to Yealands Estate and Neudorf Vineyards respectively, both of which produce Sauvignon Blanc, Pinot Noir and many more flavours that have helped put New Zealand firmly on the world's wine map.

Perhaps your best buddies prefer "liquid bread" to the nectar of grapes. "Welly", as the capital is fondly referred to, is also New Zealand's craft beer capital, and its central business district boasts a dense raft of top-rated taprooms, such as The Malthouse, Garage Project and Tuatara. Or your gang could opt for a more formal education at the Craft Beer College, which has tours, food, and "examinations" you won't mind mugging for.

Even if you're travelling solo, Kiwi

warmth means you don't have to be lonely. Wellington's laneways, or narrow alleys, are a culture unto themselves. Hannah's Laneway is dubbed "the world's tastiest laneway" by locals for obvious reasons. At Golding's Free Dive, pair a fresh brew with slices from Pizza Pomodoro just across the street, and you could end up making a new friend or two.

For the romantic: Christchurch

There are a myriad of ways to kindle - or even rekindle - love in beautiful Christchurch. For one, how about snuggling up in spacious reclining seats aboard the TranzAlpine train as it makes its 223-kilometre coast-to-coast journey? Passing the Canterbury Plains and the stunning Southern Alps of New Zealand, its journey ends in Greymouth, home of the legendary Monteith's Brewery.

If your love - or both of you - adore animals, take a coach ride of just under three hours to Kaikoura, where Dolphin Encounter Kaikoura offers the experience of a lifetime: swimming with wild dusky dolphins. Even if you prefer to stay dry, watching the acrobatic antics of these intelligent creatures from your boat is sure to be another heart-warming experience.

"Glamping" has been in vogue for quite a while now, but no country does it quite like New Zealand. Just a little under three hours away by coach from Christchurch is the idyllic seaside town of Akaroa, whose historic French connection is revealed in street names like Rue Jolie. Take in beautiful views of the ocean and surrounding hills as you relax on your luxurious king-sized bed in Akaroa Glamping's fully-kitted tents, each with a bathroom and an outdoor kitchen.

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Life-changing travel with anthropologists

Carolyn Hong travelled to a remote settlement in east Sarawak and the visit turned her life inside out, upside down



A pair of silver Havaianas were gone. I exclaimed in dismay that someone had stolen them.

The Sarawakian anthropologist, with whom I was travelling, gave me a strange look: "They aren't stolen, someone borrowed them."

He was right. Soon enough, a burly man reappeared with my dainty slippers on his feet.

We had just arrived in Ba' Kelalan, a settlement of nine villages in the mountains of east Sarawak, where my friend was researching the production of

mountain salt and its role in the community's cultural life.

I had tagged along this research trip with two other anthropologists. It turned out to be the first of many trips that we made together to rural Sarawak over the next two to three years, and a trip that turned my life inside out, upside down. But of course, back then, I did not know all that.

I had joined them simply because I wanted to see Malaysia — a place I call home but yet, knew little about its people, their ideas about a well-lived life and how they organised their communities.

As I looked at my Havaianas on the man's broad feet, I realised how little I knew about life outside the city where we treat our personal possessions as near sacred. This being my first time in a Sarawakian village, I did not know that the sharing of possessions is a routine part of people's lives.

I was surprised to find that villagers build their own amenities such as water and electricity supply, and that the telephone line worked only intermittently.

I was stunned by the blanket of stars across the dark skies on



Above: Community work includes building the village church.
Left: The villagers harvest their own padi.
Below: Village nestled in the forests of Ba' Kelalan.
PHOTOS: CAROLYN HONG



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clear nights, and thrilled to walk by the light of the moon which shines so bright that we didn't need our torchlights.

We spent the days visiting salt springs to see how salt is produced. By night, we talked about random things that we had seen. With anthropologists, conversations inevitably turned to structures and systems, and communities.

I began to catch a glimpse of value systems so different from mine, and lives where people are not defined by their jobs. To the question 'what do you do for a living,' I got a baffled silence as many people didn't slave away at just one occupation that comes to define them. Their answer will likely be along the lines of 'I farm, I hunt, I fish, I make things, I build houses ...

I also began to see that how people's identities aren't necessarily wedded to the abstract concept of race. The people I met were as likely to identify themselves as being from a particular place, as being from a particular ethnic group.

It was a week filled with discoveries. After that first trip, I leapt at every chance to travel with the anthropologists.

As I got to know Sarawak better, it became harder to return to Kuala Lumpur each time.

Long story short, I decided to stay for a while in Ba' Kelalan after a friend from a non-governmental organisation offered me some volunteer work there. Well, I did get the work done by and by but spent more time simply enjoying life and learning new skills, from planting rice to foraging for wild vegetables.

The months went by, and Ba' Kelalan, with its deep sense of community and tranquil pace of life, became a place where I felt truly at home. Most people can speak Malay, and I have since picked up a rudimentary grasp of the local language, Lun Bawang.

Now, five years later, I am

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still here. Obviously, there have been plenty of adjustments and cultural differences along the way.

For me, the most difficult switch was from an urban to a remote rural environment. I didn't miss the shops or internet but it took a while to adjust to a communal type of life.

In a village, community life is very important, and that means a lot of community work to maintain amenities like water and power supply, clean the village grounds and host visitors. Weddings and funerals are multi-day community affairs. The frequent community work can be disruptive to your own plans but it is part of village life.

The change hasn't been easy but it has been deeply enriching, with plenty of new discoveries to discuss with my anthropologist friends. As it turned out, travelling with anthropologists can change your life.

going there

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Guidelines
Ba' Kelalan is a settlement of nine villages in the mountains of east Sarawak. Located about 1,000 metres above sea level, its main economic activity is rice farming. It is around 120km from the nearest town on a logging road, or a short flight on a small aircraft operated by Malaysia Airlines. Tourists often visit for its fresh cool climate and scenic views. Ba' Kelalan is also the gateway to Mt Murud, the highest mountain in Sarawak.

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This is a first-person account by Sweet writer Michelle Chin, who took her first overseas trip on board Superstar Leo when she was nine. She has remained spellbound ever since.

Illustrated by Ng Weng Chi

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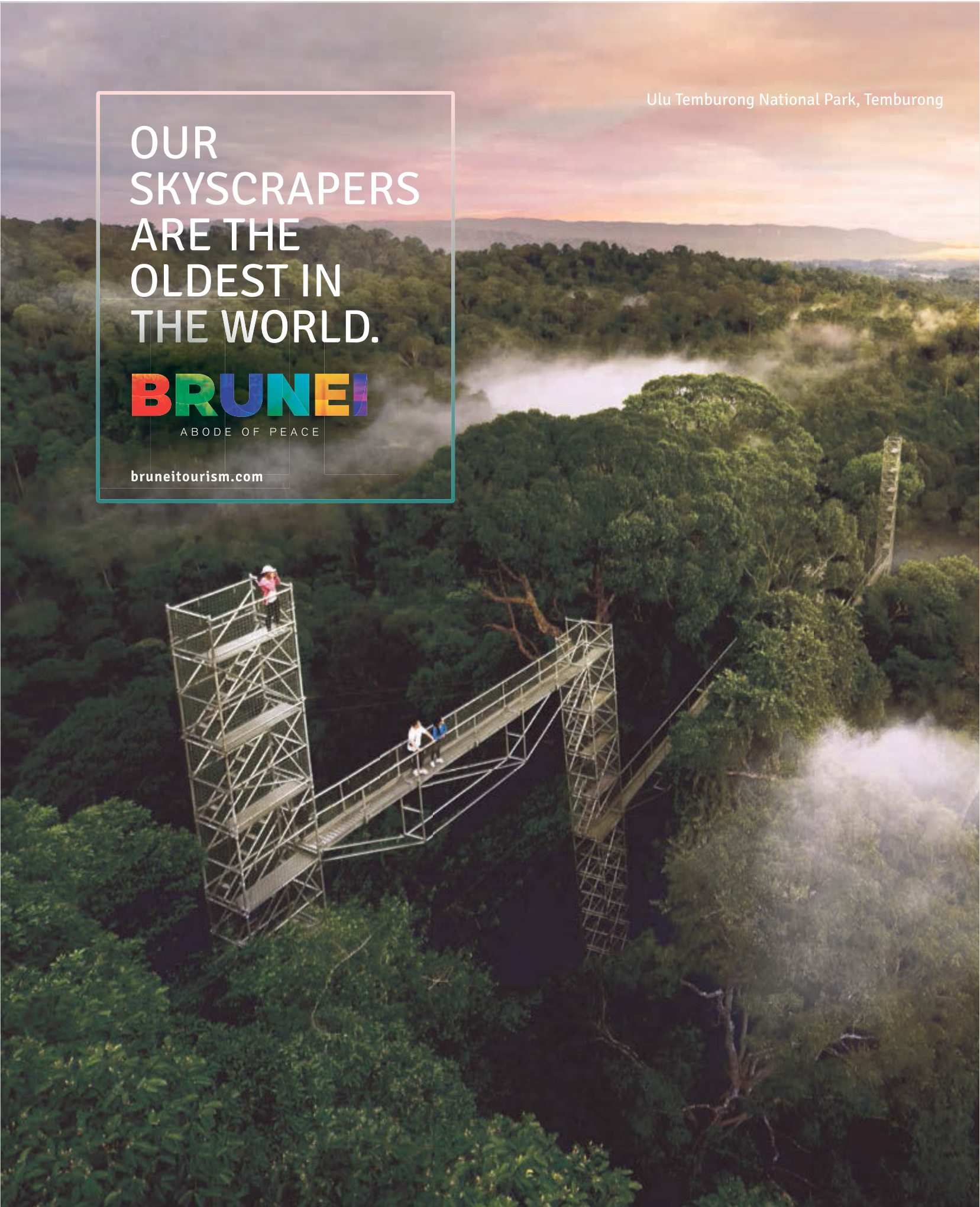
With more than 70 per cent of the country covered by jungles, it is no surprise that Brunei is a hidden paradise waiting to be discovered by nature lovers. Its jungles are some of the oldest in the world and are vastly untouched by development. At Damuan Recreational Park, jog along quiet pathways next to lush shrubbery and stunning sculptures. The highlight is the gorgeous view that you can get from the park of Istana Nurul Iman — the official residence of the Sultan of Brunei. For those seeking a challenge, the Bukit Shahbandar Forest Recreational Park hosts a variety of challenging forest trails. Easily accessible to visitors from the Muara-Tutong Highway, the park extends over 70 ha of rolling terrain. There is an observation tower atop the summit of the ninth hill at the park, providing clear views of the South China Sea and much of Brunei's pristine rainforests. You can also consider underwater adventures along Brunei's 161 km-long coastline. The country's diving spots appeal to two types of divers — the diving

enthusiast-cum-photographer and the fearless wreck diver who will have more than 30 shipwrecks to choose from. If you are keen on the macro dives, head to the Oil Rig Reef just west of Pelong Island. Part of Brunei's efforts to be more environmentally friendly, the reef is a build-up of decommissioned oil rigs which have been turned into homes for hard and soft corals. Photographers will love the countless opportunities for wide shots of schooling fish, and macro shots of nudibranchs and tiny cowries. For a taste of history, head to a World War II American wreck which is half an hour by boat from the Muara harbour. Perfect for advanced divers, the wreck is a minesweeper called the USS Salute that was broken in half during the war. Marine life at the site include schools of trevallies and fusiliers. When it is time to wind down, check out Kampong Ayer. Named "water village" in Malay, the town is popularly known as the "Venice of the East". Visitors can hop on a river cruise that takes them around the village or stroll along the interconnected bridges and walkways.



Left: Go deep-diving with marine life along Brunei's coastline. Top: View the Istana Nurul Iman, Brunei's stunning centrepiece. PHOTOS: SHUTTERSTOCK, ROYAL BRUNEI AIRLINES

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The Chan and Matsuda families meet for the first time. (Writer not pictured)
PHOTO: BRYANT CHAN

one hand, her other hand firmly wrapped around a hanging strap overhead. "Legally, Haruki's brother isn't even related to you — just to me."

This was true. I knew this because I'd Googled the question "How is my sister's husband's brother related to me?" the night before. (Answer: he isn't.)

But sitting opposite the two of them in a restaurant on the 38th floor of Yebisu Garden Place, it seemed like they were barely related to each other, for that matter.

Over the eight years that I'd known him, I'd never seen Haruki's rakish grin leave his face. He had an irresistible compulsion to pick up every cat he saw. His fastball

Gimpei at Yebisu Garden Place is highly regarded for its fish and soba, but its desserts are not to be missed either.
PHOTO: BRYANT CHAN

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CONTINUED ON PAGE 20

Natas
travel 2019

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 19

Thicker
than water

"You can say that because you're still young. I am almost 40. It's not... good... for someone so old to go on stage, play music in front of so many people... you know?"

"I tried to stifle my laughter with a sip of tea and failed miserably. "I am being serious," he said, though he was smiling. "Why do you laugh?"

That's the most Japanese thing I've ever heard, I wanted to say, but I didn't know how.

"Sasuga nihonjin," I told him instead. How Japanese.

The smile turned into a grin — and just for a moment, I saw the slightest hint of his younger brother's mischievous streak in his eyes.

"Yes." Half-melted ice cubes clinked as he drained the last of his shochu. "Sasuga nihonjin."

Three umeshu sodas and a couple of chu-hai later, I don't quite remember what I said over the rest of lunch.

I do remember having a lot of fun, though, which I think is what matters more.

"Thank you for today," I told Takeshi, my head pleasantly fuzzy, as our respective families stood up to part ways. Chairs scraped the floor in a chorus of wood on slate.

He looked at me quizzically. "What for?"

"Um..." I knew the word for youth, and the word for people, but not the phrase for young people.

"For... talking," I said instead.

Above: Tokyo appears in an entirely different light when you have family there.

The writer's guitar.
PHOTOS: BRYANT CHAN



"It must be boring to have to talk to youth... people... youth people? Children."

"Waka," he corrected, smiling. "And no, it was fun. It was good for me to practise my English."

"My Japanese will be better the next time we meet," I promised. "I'd like to practise more in future."

"I'm sure we will." He extended a hand. "It is more comfortable to speak to family, also."

Family. I silently tasted the word in my mouth, feeling it trip across my tongue. Kazoku.

Were we really, though? Not less than two hours ago we were complete strangers. And now, just because our

strangers. And now, just because our siblings were getting married to each other, we were supposed to be family — even if, technically, we weren't?

Takeshi hesitated, withdrawing his hand slightly. "Is that strange to say?"

"A little." I grasped his hand firmly, and shook. "But I think I could get used to it."



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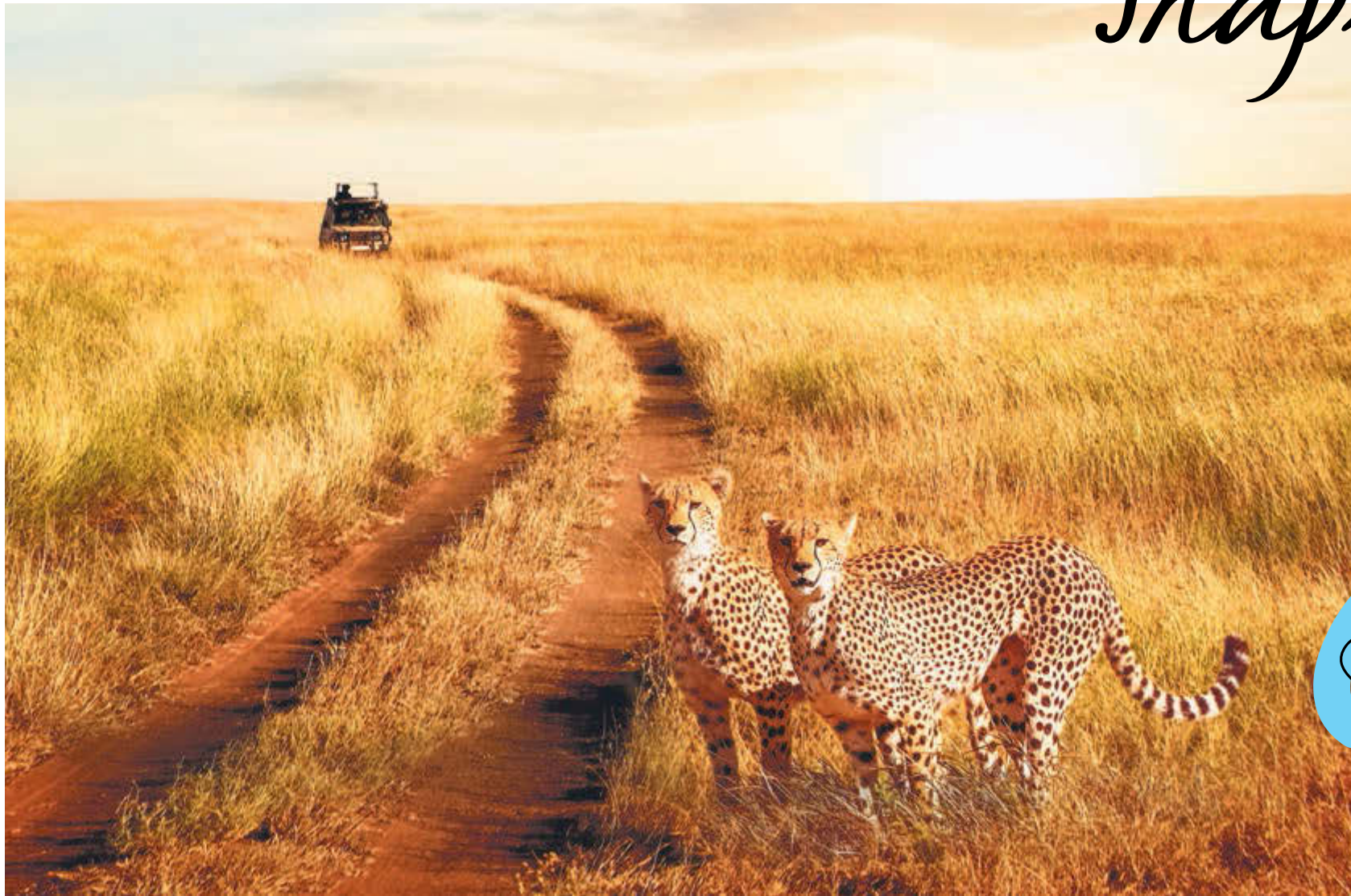
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Snapshots in time

The journeys we make are sometimes real, oftentimes illusory. The experiences, regardless, are enriching. Here, Sweet writers share their imaginary voyages to iconic destinations.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10

Serengeti in Tanzania

My brother and I enjoy coming here. It is about a day's journey from home. If you come at the right time, you can see the human creatures as they pass in jeeps, sometimes many at once. They move slowly, almost as though they are watching us as much as we are watching them.

Father says they are dangerous, but all they shoot are photos.

JOSHUA WONG

Neuschwanstein Castle in Germany

Kiddo: I want long long hair like her.
Me: Like who?
Kiddo: Like Rapunzel.
Me: Huh?
Kiddo (points to the tallest turret): There. She pretty. But why sad face?
Me (shrugs): Maybe her prince didn't come to rescue her as promised.
Kiddo (covers face): She looking at you now, Mummy. She scary face now.
Me:

GOH HWEE KOON



Louvre Museum in Paris, France

He didn't buy me a diamond ring — I said I didn't need it — but he bought me tickets to this iconic gem instead.

The Louvre.
Indeed it was money well spent as we admired the world-famous architecture of the museum and appreciated the history of this French monument.

We knew it was going to be a cliché but we did what everyone does — seek the Mona Lisa and peer from a distance, through a crowd many times larger than the painting, at her mysterious smile.

MEREDITH WOO



Easter Island in Insular Chile

"Their noses are so big!" said my 10-year-old cousin. "I bet I could fit my whole fist in there."

"Please don't say that," I replied. "That one is almost buried, look!" he exclaimed.

"He was punished for being naughty. But he has an eye out, so he can still watch the world," I quipped.

"I wish I could watch the world after I die," he said.
"So do I," I added.

JOSHUA WONG



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The best of the mess

Esther Teo learns that bad times don't last but good times do during a road trip with her hubby, parents and mother-in-law in Perth



Esther (far left), with her family posing as explorers at Pinnacles Desert. PHOTOS: ESTHER TEO

Warring in-laws are a common trope for TV dramas — at least in the over-the-top, thousand-episode Taiwanese ones I've watched. Luckily, my parents and mother-in-law get along cordially in real life. But still, I felt uneasy when my husband suggested to ask them along for our next holiday trip. We had just gotten married a few months ago and I wasn't sure if going on a long bumpy road trip would strengthen or strain their budding relationship. But we threw caution to the wind and decided on a five-day trip to Perth in Australia. It would be my mother-in-law's first trip on a plane to an "ang moh" (foreign) country.

The drama begins
We landed in Perth on a balmy

winter morning and began ticking off some of its greatest hits: hang out with koalas at the Caversham Wildlife Park, explore Pinnacles Desert, pig out at Lobster Shack Cervantes, sample wine in Swan Valley and shop at Fremantle Market.

Everything was hunky dory till we arrived at our Airbnb accommodation, a lovely terrace house by the picturesque Swan River. It did cross my mind that it could be a matter of time before our relations went south — just not in a way I'd anticipated.

So both my mother and mother-in-law deemed the room with a balcony overlooking the river as the best in the unit and fervently urged each to stay in it. The rest of us were gobsmacked as we watched the comedy unfold. But it soon stopped being amusing

as the strange tussle to win for the benefit of the other escalated into a royal rumble. After a tug of war with luggages and sighs of exasperation from the rest of us who tried to mediate, the room eventually went to my husband and me as they gave up and refused to even step foot inside it.

At every meal time, they would fight tooth and nail to push the last morsel of food they had onto the other's plate, in an overly valiant attempt to be the last one standing (on ceremony). Diners from other tables looked on, bemused at the spectacle they were unwittingly creating. My foodie father settled the disputes by happily finishing up what they tried so hard to offer each other.

I never thought I'd say this, but their selfless, giving nature, which resulted in this constant courtesy one-upmanship, was grating on my nerves.

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Celebrity Constellation® (90,940 tons)
Ports of Call: Dubai (Overnight), Muscat, Mumbai (Overnight), Goa, Cochin, Colombo, Phuket, Singapore
2019 Departures: Dec 3
2020 Departures: Jan 2, 17*, Feb 1, 16*, Mar 2, 17*
FROM SGD 1,861*

*Cruise operates in reverse

10 NIGHT TREASURES OF THE WESTERN MEDITERRANEAN CRUISE
Celebrity Edge™ (129,500 tons) **New Ship!**
Ports of Call: Rome, Naples/Capri, Palma De Mallorca, Barcelona (Overnight), Monte Carlo, Santa Margherita, Florence/Pisa (La Spezia), Rome
2019 Departure: Jun 5, Aug 30, Sep 20, Oct 11
FROM SGD 2,711*

11 NIGHT EDGE AMALFI COAST & GREEK ISLES CRUISE
Celebrity Edge™ (129,500 tons) **New Ship!**
Ports of Call: Rome, Sicily, Valletta, Santorini, Athens (Piraeus), Mykonos, Nauplion, Katakolon, Naples/Capri, Rome
2019 Departure: Aug 19, Sep 9, 30*, Oct 21*
2020 Departure: May 25, Jul 6, 27, Aug 17
FROM SGD 3,441*

*Port differs

14 NIGHT SINGAPORE TO HONG KONG CRUISE
Celebrity Millennium® (91,000 tons)
Ports of Call: Singapore, Bangkok (Laem Chabang), Ho Chi Minh (Phu My), Hue/Danang (Chan My), Hanoi (Halong Bay, Overnight), Hong Kong
Singapore Departures: 2019 Dec 7* & 21
FROM SGD 1,949*

*Cruise operates in reverse

7 NIGHT ALASKA NORTHBOUND/SOUTHERN GLACIER CRUISE
Celebrity Millennium® (91,000 tons)
Ports of Call: Vancouver, Inside Passage, Ketchikan, Icy Straits Point, Juneau, Skagway, Hubbard Glacier, Seward
2019 Northbound Departures: May 10 - Aug 30 (every Friday)
2019 Southbound Departures: May 17 - Aug 23 (every Friday)
FROM SGD 791*

*Alaska Southern Glacier cruise operates in reverse, port order differs.

12/14 NIGHT SCANDINAVIA & RUSSIA CRUISE
Celebrity Silhouette® (122,400 tons)
Celebrity Reflection® (126,000 tons)
Ports of Call: Amsterdam, Berlin (Warnemunde), Helsinki, St Petersburg (Overnight), Tallinn, Stockholm, Copenhagen, Amsterdam
Celebrity Silhouette® 2019 Departures: May 19*, Jun 2*
Celebrity Reflection® 2019 Departures: Jul 20, Aug 1*, 25
FROM SGD 3,101*

*Port differs *Round trip from Southampton, port differs

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*Applicable on selected 7N & Above Alaska 2019 Sailings

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Royal Princess® 142,000 tons
Ports-of-call: Vancouver (British Columbia, Canada), Ketchikan (Alaska), Juneau (Alaska), Skagway (Alaska), Glacier Bay National Park (Scenic Cruising), College Fjord (Scenic Cruising), Anchorage (Whittier)
2019 DEPARTURES May 11, 18, 25 | Jun 1, 8, 15, 22, 29
Aug 3, 10, 17, 24, 31 | Sep 7 from **SGD 1,052***

*Itinerary operates in reverse for selected sailing dates
 *Southbound: College Fjord replace with Hubbard Glacier

10 days 8 nights Alaska Fly-Cruise with Glacier Bay National Park
Ruby Princess® 113,000 tons
Ports-of-call: Seattle (United States), Juneau (Alaska), Skagway (Alaska), Glacier Bay National Park (Scenic Cruising), Ketchikan (Alaska), Victoria (Canada), Seattle (United States)
2019 DEPARTURES May 11, 18 | Jun 1, 8, 15 | Jul 13, 20
Aug 10, 17, 31 | Sep 7 from **SGD 2,688***

Package Includes Return Air ticket to Seattle, Transfer, 1N Pre-Hotel Stay & City Tour

7 nights Canada & New England
Regal Princess® 142,000 tons
Ports-of-call: New York City (Manhattan or Brooklyn, New York), Newport (Rhode Island), Boston (Massachusetts, United States), Bar Harbor (Maine, United States), Saint John (for the Bay of Fundy, New Brunswick Canada), Halifax (Nova Scotia, Canada), New York City (Manhattan or Brooklyn, New York)
2019 DEPARTURES Sep 21, 28
Oct 5, 12 & 19 from **SGD 1,282***

12 nights British Isles (with Liverpool)
Crown Princess® 113,000 tons
Ports-of-call: London (Southampton), Guernsey (St. Peter Port), Cork (Ireland), Cobh (For Blarney Castle), Dublin (Ireland), Liverpool (England), Belfast (Northern Ireland), Glasgow (Glasgow), Invergoron (Scotland), Edinburgh (South Queensferry, Scotland), Paris/Normandy (Le Havre, France), London (Southampton, England)
2019 DEPARTURES May 25 | Jun 6
Jul 24 | Sep 10 from **SGD 2,564***

8 nights Spring Flowers
Diamond Princess® 115,875 tons
Ports-of-call: Tokyo (Yokohama), Kanmon Straits (Japan), Busan (South Korea), Sakata (Japan), Aomori (Japan), Miyako (Japan), Tokyo (Yokohama)
2019 DEPARTURES Apr 19 from **SGD 943***

10 days 7 nights Mediterranean Fly-Cruise
Emerald Princess® 113,000 tons
Ports-of-call: Barcelona (Spain), Gibraltar, Marseille (Provence, France), Genoa (Italy), Florence/Pisa (Livorno, Italy), Rome (Civitavecchia, Italy)
2019 DEPARTURES Jun 8 | Jul 20
Aug 10, 31 from **SGD 2,108***

*11N Sep 21 & Oct 13 - Port differs
Package Includes Air ticket to Barcelona and return from Rome

14 days 11 nights Scandinavia & Russia Fly-Cruise
Regal Princess®
Ports-of-call: Copenhagen (Denmark), Stockholm (Nynashamn, Sweden), Helsinki (Finland), St. Petersburg (Russia), Tallinn (Estonia), Berlin (Warnemunde), Oslo (Norway), Copenhagen (Denmark)
2019 DEPARTURES Jun 1, 12, 23
Jul 4 | Aug 6 from **SGD 3,518***

Package Includes Return Air ticket to Copenhagen

7 days 6 nights Japan & Korea Fly-Cruise
Majestic Princess® 143,700 tons
Ports-of-call: Taipei (Keelung), Nagasaki (Japan), Busan (Korea), Yeosu (Korea), Taipei (Keelung)
2019 DEPARTURES Jun 8 from **SGD 1,318***

Package Includes Return Air ticket to Taipei

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* Price quoted is in SGD, per person, based on the lowest priced cabin category. Prices quoted are subjected to associated taxes and fees of \$350 - \$850 per person. Prices and promotions are valid for NEW bookings only, subject to change without prior notice and cabin availability at the time of booking. Perks are applicable on selected sailings dates and cabin category. Other terms and conditions apply.

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Ports-of-Call: Penang* or Kuala Lumpur (Port Klang) & Melaka
Singapore Departures: 2019: Mar 11* | Apr 30
May 3, 10, 17, 24, 31 | Jun 7, 14, 21 from **S\$299.50***

*Ports differ

4 nights GEMS OF SOUTHEAST ASIA CRUISE
Ports-of-Call: Penang, Phuket
Singapore Departures: 2019: Mar 14, 18 | May 6, 13, 20, 27
Jun 3, 10, 17 from **S\$429***

*Ports differ

5 nights SPICE OF SOUTHEAST ASIA CRUISE
Ports-of-Call: Kuala Lumpur (Port Klang), Penang, Langkawi, Phuket
Singapore Departures: 2019: Jun 24 from **S\$768***

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Optional Tour in Shanghai or Nanjing Available!

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Singapore Departures: 2019: Oct 25
Nov 1, 8 from **S\$388***

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Ports-of-Call: Phuket, Penang
Singapore Departures: 2019: Oct 21, 28
Nov 4 from **S\$538***

5 nights SPICE OF SOUTHEAST ASIA CRUISE
Ports-of-Call: Melaka, Penang, Phuket
Singapore Departures: 2019: Nov 11 from **S\$658***

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4 nights MALAYSIA CRUISE
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Dec 5, 19
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Ports-of-Call: Kuala Lumpur (Port Klang), Penang, Phuket
Singapore Departure: 2019: Nov 16, 25, 30
Dec 9, 14, 23 (Xmas), 28 (New Year)
2020: Jan 28 (CNY)
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Package Includes: One way air ticket

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* All price quoted in SGD based on lowest available stateroom of the featured dates, for per person on twin-sharing basis, subject to associated taxes, port expenses and gratuities ranging from \$115 - \$530. Free Travel Insurance: Applicable on Royal Caribbean Cruises Singapore homeport sailing from Apr 30, 2019 onwards. Balcony twin-share & above. All promotion are non-combinable. Valid on new bookings only. All information is correct at the time of print, subject to availability and change without prior notice. Other terms and conditions apply.

Right: Rottne
Island is a slice
of paradise and
a must-visit for
nature-lovers.

Below:
Esther's mother
(left) and
mother-in-law
enjoyed cycling
on Rottne
Island.

PHOTOS: ESTHER TEO



Freewheeling by the coast, I felt a sense of calm that filled my soul as I inhaled the fresh air tinged with sea breeze and watched ospreys riding the wind above, with my nearest and dearest not far behind. I could see that even my risk-averse mother-in-law was beginning to let her hair down and enjoy the great outdoors.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 24

The best of the mess

I never thought I'd say this, but their selfless, giving nature, which resulted in this constant courtesy one-upmanship, was grating on my nerves.

And if you think one mother is difficult to please, try travelling with two. We often found ourselves at an impasse when making decisions — such as which place to visit or where to eat — because the two matriarchs could not make up their minds. Would it be too unsafe? Too cold? Too tiring? Too expensive? They quizzed endlessly.

By the third day of the trip, I was rolling my eyes so much I thought they would atrophy.

All I'd wanted was for them to relax and enjoy the trip, but it seemed like mother hens just cannot stop being mother hens — putting everyone else's needs above their own and constantly worrying about every single thing on the trip.

Things fall apart

My ideal family holiday crumbled even further when we got to the idyllic Rottne Island, a protected nature reserve that is 90 minutes by ferry from Perth's Barrack Street Jetty. It was meant to be the highlight of our trip, but due to a lack of options in winter, we'd have to settle for the best accommodation available — a three-bed dorm room in a three-star hotel.

To my mortification, our room turned out to be a dilapidated hole in a wall, with dust all over the floor, peeling paint, creaky spring beds and a musty bathroom.

It sent my mother and mother-in-law's proclivity for cleaning into overdrive. They were all over the room in seconds, clearing cobwebs, investigating the buoyancy of the beds and more.

Meanwhile, I was trying to shake off the disappointment and guilt for letting them down with

such subpar accommodation.

Despite my protests, the best bed — which I thought should be reserved for my mum because of her bad back — eventually went to hubby and me.

Paradise found

I was glad when we got out on our rental bicycles to explore the island.

For once, there was peace as everyone's efforts were trained on navigating the island's meandering pathways and ascending its steep slopes on two wheels. Looking at my parents tackling the upslopes with gusto, I sheepishly resolved to step up my exercise regime when we returned home.

Rottne Island is a little slice of paradise with clear skies and sparkling, azure blue sea for as far as the eye can see, as well as pristinely white sandy beaches and quiet coves perfect for picnics.

Freewheeling by the coast, I felt a sense of calm that filled my soul as I inhaled the fresh air tinged with sea breeze and watched ospreys riding the wind above — with my nearest and dearest not far behind. I could see that even my risk-averse mother-in-law was beginning to let her hair down and enjoy the great outdoors.

With frequent rest stops (and non-stop snacking), we got as far as Cathedral Rocks, a 22km round trip from our hotel. We were greeted by a magnificent colony of New Zealand fur seals lounging and splashing about like overweight water gymnasts amid the crashing waves below.

As we raced to the edge of the viewpoint for a closer look, I caught the looks of childlike wonder lighting up the faces of my parents and mother-in-law, and for a moment, smoothening each crease the years had left behind on them.

That was when it occurred to me that family trips, just like relationships cultivated over many years, are not always pretty. There are shortfalls, petty squabbles and rude awakenings, but they are always worth the effort for the laughter, love and growth they bring at the end of the day.

And despite the clashes and smothering love from my mother and mother-in-law, I wondered if I would trade all my solo travels for that one moment of pure bliss shared with my family — current and new — who will always love me.

I decided I would, in a heartbeat.

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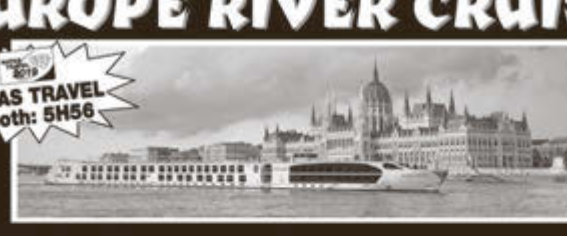
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■ **Second Prize:** A pair of return economy class tickets from Singapore to Warsaw, sponsored by Lot Polish Airlines

■ **Third Prize:** A pair of business class tickets to Bali, sponsored by Air France KLM

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CONTINUED ON 28



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Choose Dynasty Travel for a perfect holiday for families with children. Take for instance, its 7D5N Young Explorer Escapade to Melbourne that comes with a special departure on June 11. It offers separate activities for adults and kids on some days, so the parents can enjoy some "me time" without having to busy themselves with childcare duties.

The adults get to shop at local markets and a duty-free outlet, relax on a river cruise or explore a winery. As for the children, they can join enriching tour activities at the Scienceworks museum, Australian Centre for Moving Images and Healesville Sanctuary, as well as climb, jump and swing up trees in the Tree Surfing Nippers Course at the Enchanted Adventure Garden.

There is also the 13D10N Best of Belarus & Ukraine package, with departures from May to September. Expect visits to the majestic Carpathian Mountains that stretch across Central and Eastern Europe, where you can enjoy views of dense forests, mountain streams and plenty of fresh air.

You can also visit the Mir Castle, a Unesco World Heritage site at the town of Mir in Belarus. You will appreciate its gothic, baroque and renaissance architectural influences, and learn about its rich history upon entering the residence-fortress, Italian garden and other premises.



PHOTOS: DYNASTY TRAVEL

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1 Day theme park — Everland (passport tickets - unlimited) special firework show

5 Korean '1st Experience' — Chonggak Kimchi Little woman's Ginseng Farm, Big man's Pub Street

- The most fantastic [3D art world] + Most [ICE Sculpture Museum]
- The most dreamy Space-time & Virtual and reality traversing. [PLAY K-POP]
- The most artistic green tea garden. [Osulloc snow green tea]
- The most delightful. [Camellia Hill]
- The most nostalgic. [Jeonju Hanok Village]
- The most magnificent mountain and scenic spot. [National Dayun Mountain]
- The most nourishing. [Red Ginseng SPA]
- The most FUN Theme Park. [Everland]
- The Famous. [Rail bike around the lake]
- The most perfect Korean audio-visual feast. [BI-BAP show]
- The most deep Sen = body breathing "Han" paradise. [Tan Yang Chuk Yuen]
- The most Korean taste [Ginseng Farm]

[Korean Cuisine] — Ginseng Chicken, Korean BBQ, Bibimbab, Mushroom Casserole, Traditional Korean Dinner

[Fashion Shopping] — Shincheon Lady Street, Dongdaemun, Yeosu Premium Outlet, Face Shop, Amethyst Showroom, Local Products.

Dep: Cherry Blossom Festival: Mar 16,30 Apr 6,13,20,27
Tulip Blossom & Rose Festival: May 11,18,25,31 Jun 1,7,8,9,14,15,19,21,22 5/7/9D

More than 100 Group Dep: Mar - Dec 2019 **fr\$1399***

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More than 100 Group Dep: Mar - Dec 2019

HOKKAIDO

East & West ALL-IN

7N IN HOKKAIDO 4N 4★ Hot Spring EAST & WEST ALL-IN ★ SMART TRAVELLER MUST GO

- [Full view] — Otaru, Lake Toya, Hakodate, Furano, full luxury of traditional Japanese feast
- [Classic special dividend] — Enjoy 3 nights featured Japanese famous spa hotel accommodation, feel the traditional Japanese hot spring
- [Dream of flower trip] — Four Seasons color spring and summer with colorful flowers
- [Picking fruit fun] — JUN-SEP strawberry, cherry, grape, peach...
- [Romantic watch the night view] — take the cable car to watch the world's three major night view of the Hakodate beautiful night, leaving the romantic eternal memories
- [Happy tour shopping] — Hokkaido largest newest and most luxurious MITSUI OUTLET PARK, Tanukikoji street, Susukino Ramen Street
- [Japanese traditional cuisine] — Traditional Japanese Ryori & Japanese Cuisine & Onsen Ryori. ISHIKARI POT, FRESH SEAFOOD, FLOWER FISH, FURANO BUFFET, KAISEKI RYORI, ONSEN RYORI.

Sakura Blossom Festival Dep: Apr 20
Summer Fragrance & Fun Family Festival Dep: May 4,5,7,9,11,12,18,19,25,26
Lavender Festival Dep: Jun 2,9,16,23
Sunflower Festival Dep: Jul 7,21 Aug 4,18

More than 100 Group Dep: Mar - Dec 2019 **fr\$1799***

HONSHU

Direct Flight to TOKYO/OSAKA

Full View of TOKYO/OSAKA/NAGOYA/ HAKONE/KYOTO/NARA/TOYAMA

5★ Hotel-Sheraton/Hilton/Wyndham

2N Hot Spring Hotel vs onsen cuisine

Japanese food, Full board VS Kobe Beef

More than 100 Group Dep: 7D **fr\$1399** Hong Kong Mar - Dec 2019 Shanghai

KYUSHU

Direct Flight to KYUSHU

Full View of Kyushu

6N 4★ Hotel: 3N Hot Spring Hotel

All Japanese Food vs Onsen cuisine

Night View by Cable Car

Flower Festival

More than 100 Group Dep: 8D **fr\$1799** Hong Kong Mar - Dec 2019 Full board Shanghai

SILK ROAD

XINJIANG NORTH AND SOUTH

Tianshan Tianchi — Standing beside Tianchi for the panoramic view of the highest mountain in Tianshan, Bogda Kekeetuohai National Geological Park (Shenzhongshan area), experience the various landscape in Xinjiang

Kanas Lake — Mysterious and beautiful Kanas lake and numerous bays and river banks, cruise included

10/11/14D **fr\$1398*** Dep: Apr 17 May 17,31 Jun 9,14 Sep 6

TIBET

AMAZING TIBET

10000 pax Lianhe Wanbao Readers have been to Tibet with Jun-Air

Gift - Tianzhu Chinese cuisine Doctor Accompanied Special Insurance Covered Unveiling of the Gigantic scroll of Buddha

8/10/12 UP **\$2388** Days **fr\$1388** Dep: Apr 19 May 10,24 Jun 7,21

NORTH KOREA

MYSTERIOUS TRIP

Step across the 38 degrees north latitude, step into the unfamiliar territory.

North Korea: Pyongyang, Kaesong, Panmunjom, Miaoxiang Mountain

Dongbei: Shenyang, Pingxi Water cave, Panjin Red Beach, Dandong, China

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Moscow/Siberia/Lake Baikal/Yenisei/Mongolian Grassland/Gobi Desert/Beilina/Greatwall

16D **fr\$7999***

CHINA

5★ BUY 1 GET 2 FREE

DREAM ROAD OF BIG SHANGRI-LA RING ROAD TRIP VS GRANDIOSE GLACIER-HAILUOGUO

March - Aug Peach Flowers/ Peony & Tulip/ Highland Rhododendron

3 Nights International 5 Star Hotel Intercontinental Century City

2 Nights 5 Star Hot Spring Gongga Shendang Hot Spring Hotel

2 Nights Local Ethnic Characteristics Hotel

8D fr\$999 Daily Dep

[Hailuoguo Glacier Forest Park] — Located at the lowest altitude spot around in Asia, Hailuoguo Glacier Forest Park is an integrative scenic area consisting of modern oceanic glacier, complete virgin forest, as well as boiling, hot, and cold springs.

[Redstone park] — Redstone is given to Hong GongShan nature in one of the most rare species, in Hailuoguo, elegant and Geng red, and other scenic areas are the result of large area white red, each stone was put on a red mosses beautiful red coat.

[Xingduqiao] — Has been long famed as a photographer's paradise in China

[Tegong Grassland] — Tegong or Ulaqing in Tibetan language means a favorite place of Bodhisattva.

ZHANGJIAJIE

THREE GORGES

Grand Canyon & Eco Glass Bridge Fenghuang Ancient Town

- Full view Zhangjiajie, Fenghuang, Tianmen series (Tianmen, Tianmen Cave, Tianmen cable car) Grand Canyon Skywalk, Gul Plank Road.
- Full view of the Three Gorges: 5★ luxury cruise "Century Cruise", Independent viewing balcony, Captain welcome dinner, party, farewell dinner.

Mt. Tianmen + Tianmen Cave + 5★ Century Cruise + Private Balcony

8/10D **fr\$799*** More than 100 Group Dep: Mar - Dec 2019 5★ Daily Dep

SHANGDONG/HENAN

FLOWER KISS MY HEART

Qingdao/Weifang/Taian/Qufu/Jinan/Kaifeng/Heze 8/10D

★ Peach Flower Festival (Taishan) ★ Sakura Festival (Qingdao)

★ Peony Festival (Heze Luoyang) ★ The Kite Festival (Weifang) **fr\$888***

More than 100 Group Dep: Mar - Dec 2019 Dep: Mar 24,31 Apr 7, 14,21 & Every Wed, Fri

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"ARCTIC VILLAGE" MOHE + INNER MONGOLIA

- China's only natural wonder "Northern Lights" observation point
- Hailar / Ergun / Mohe / Arctic Village / Genhe Hulun Bulir
- Qiqihar / Heihe / Wudalianchi/ Red Beach / Changbai Mt. / Jinpo Lake Tour

★ Watching the natural wonders on the northernmost border of China - Northern Lights

★ Arctic Village - Spring in summer, the midnight sun "the sun is not falling - never sleeps the city"

★ Tour the most beautiful prairie in Hulunbeier, crossing the Daxing'anling primeval forest, Qiqihar Nationality Park - home of the red-crowned crane, wetland

Dep: (Red Sea) May 19 Jun 2 Sep 8 Oct 20 (Northern Lights) Jun 16,18,23,25 8/9/10D **fr\$899***

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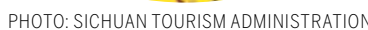
Taxes: fr\$90 - \$750

*Terms & conditions apply

Hot deals and travel updates



If you prefer free and easy holidays, the 12D11N Mama Mia! Greece! and 8D6N Awesome Sydney and Melbourne will catch your attention.



If you prefer to relax and enjoy gorgeous scenery during your travels, go for the package Dream Road of Big Shangri-La Ring Road Trip vs Grandiose Glacier - Hailuoguo. The Hailuoguo Glacier Forest Park, Xingduqiao and Tagong Grassland will definitely appeal to photography enthusiasts.



The airline is also celebrating its latest win of three Skytrax 2018 World Airline Awards — World's Best Economy Class, World's Best Airline Lounge Spa and Best Economy Class Onboard Catering.



For more information, visit:

- Japan By Japan (japanbyjapan.com/)
- Japan National Tourism Organization (www.japan.travel/en/)
- Hokkaido Official Tourism Website (en.visit-hokkaido.jp/)
- Welcome Kansai Project (welcomkansai.net/)



Join EU Holidays on its 12D9N Legends of Balkans package that will bring you to Romania, Bulgaria, Macedonia and Albania. Foodies can look forward to tuck into Albania lamb and yogurt, Ohrid trout and traditional pork knuckle with beer.

The highlights of places of interest include:

- Romania's Sinaia, Bran, Brasov, Sighisoara, Sibiu and Bucharest;
- Bulgaria's Rila, Sofia and Veliko Tarnovo;
- Macedonia's Lake Ohrid and Skopje; and
- Albania's Tirana and Berat.



New members will receive a bonus of 1,500 reward points. Terms and conditions apply.

You can also check out tour packages such as 9 Days Best of Russia, Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk and Korea, 8 Days Awesome South Taiwan and Xiao Liu Qiu, 8 Days Mystic Mongolia Grassland and Beijing Tour, as well as Gourmet Tours with Chef Huang Ching Biao in China.



UOB Travel is celebrating its 45th Birthday Bash with special deals such as 45 per cent off to the second guest per booking to Australia on in-house packages, and a special rate of \$45 for a child per booking on selected Australia in-house packages.

In addition, get up to 13 per cent cash back on selected cruises, packages and hotels with UOB Cards. Terms and conditions apply.

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Voyager of the Seas offers many activities and entertainment options, with exciting features such as a surf simulator and an ice-skating rink. Do not miss the fun on a three-night cruise to Bintan/Melaka and Kuala Lumpur (Port Klang) from April to June.

You can opt to go on board Spectrum of the Seas in May too. Try its Sky Pad VR bungee trampoline, SeaPlex's bumper cars and the skydiving simulator for an exciting adventure at sea.



Sign up for Hong Thai Travel's 13D Highlights of Eastern Europe package that takes you to Hungary, Austria, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland and Germany. Visit the Schönbrunn Palace, experience a Danube cruise lunch with champagne and wine, and explore the film setting of The Sound of Music at Salzburg.



Prefer to travel closer to Singapore?
Check out the 6D Perfect Central Vietnam
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Enjoy the following discounts:

- US\$68 off for Trafalgar's Europe, Britain, USA and Canada trips at US\$2,500 and above.



- US\$50 Optional Experience Vouchers for CostSaver trips. Book a CostSaver trip to Europe and Britain from S\$1,698 person with British Airways return flight included.
- US\$100 off for Trafalgar's South America and Africa trips.
- Qatar Airways all-inclusive fare to Europe from S\$799.
- AF/KLM all inclusive fare to South America from S\$1,888.

Terms and conditions apply.



Singapore Airlines
Booth: 6H22
Come September, Singapore Airlines will be the only airline that flies non-stop from Singapore to Seattle. The estimated duration of the flight will be about 14 hours and 40 minutes via the Airbus A350-900.

Visit the Singapore Airlines' NATAS booth for a look at the A350-900 seats. Promotional fares to Seattle start from \$988 all-in for economy class, \$1,498 all-in for premium economy class and \$6,138 all-in for business class.

Purchase any Singapore Airlines or SilkAir package from appointed travel agents and redeem limited edition giveaways at the booth. Also, stand a chance to win air tickets, vouchers and more when you book your tickets with Mastercard.

Terms and conditions apply.

• Visit Gibraltar • La Sagrada Familia • The Rozas Factory Outlet 2ND PKX Dep: Apr - Dec \$1,199 \$0	H End Deluxe Glass Igloo with Aurora Alone 2ND PKX Dep: Apr - Dec \$1,349 \$0	Scandinavian Itinerary 2ND PKX Dep: Apr - Dec \$1,399 \$0	150 AMAZING COMPREHENSIVE GREAT BRITAIN & IRELAND 2ND PKX Dep: Apr - Dec \$1,399 \$0
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*Taxes: fr\$255-9920 (Subject to change with/without period).

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